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Heavy Burdens on Small Shoulders:
The Invisible Labour of Children in Anglo Pioneer Farming Families on the Western Canadian Prairies, 1871-1913

by

©

Sandra L. Rollings-Magnusson

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Department of Sociology

Edmonton, Alberta
Fall, 2003

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S. McDaniel

M. Eichler
Sociology and Equity Studies in Education,
University of Toronto

May 12, 2003

"For those who wish to live in idleness,

or expect to get rich in some uncertain way without work,

the North-West is no place."

- *The NorthWest Farmer*
(1891, p. 10)

ABSTRACT

This dissertation focuses on revealing the role that children's work played in the operation of family farms in the western Canadian prairie region during the period of settlement between 1871 and 1913. The information used in the study was obtained from writings prepared by pioneer children during or in relation to the study period such as diaries, memoirs, letters and poems together with official records such as Census reports. This information expands our knowledge of the child labour involved in farming an undeveloped region where settlers had to overcome numerous geographic, climatic and financial obstacles if they wished to succeed. Many settlers managed to endure and prosper despite the obstacles that existed but it is evident that success was dependent on the availability of labour. The technology of the day determined that operations would be labour intensive rather than mechanized and thus created a scenario in which children's work could provide value and necessary assistance to the family farm.

Utilizing a socio-historical approach, this study reveals that children contributed to the operation of family farms in the prairie region for a variety of reasons, not least of which was their own personal survival. A typology of the work performed by children is developed and divisions by gender and age are discussed, but it is also noted that the economic importance of children's efforts was unrecognized, as had been the case with women's labour on family farms. Given the similar positions of women and children within the economic and power

relations of farm families, it is argued that the theories developed to explain the role of women as economically invisible farmers may be extended to include farm children within their explanatory reach.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

The romanticized view of pioneering on the Canadian prairies envisioned happy young families leaving their homes to grasp the freedom and opportunities abounding in the newly opened region. If the beautiful drawings that adorned the covers of advertising brochures were to be believed, these men and women would enter the region, claim their free land, and settle down to the process of growing crops, raising cattle and building a log house from the supplies of timber that were readily available, all with little apparent effort.[1] Similarly, the booklet put out by the Minister of Immigration and Colonization (1894) depicted what could be taken for a 'typical' prairie farm with large fields of ripened wheat, a herd of cattle, well-built and attractive buildings, and a stream that ran through the property which would supply ample fresh water for drinking and washing. If needed, the stream would also be a ready source of water for the family's livestock and poultry as well as the garden whose soil was so fertile that it would eventually be filled with fast growing, large and delicious fruits and vegetables. Similarly, after cutting through the protective layer of sod on the fields and casting seed onto the rich soil beneath, the family could relax until the fall when their fields of golden wheat would mature in the warm prairie sunshine. Standing arm in arm, listening to their happy children playing and watching the sun set over grain that grew as far as the eye could see, would provide the couple with a feeling of satisfaction, knowing that once the harvesting chore was complete and the profits banked, their future and that of their children would be well on its way.[2]

Unfortunately, real life in the prairie region did not match the fantasy set out above. For the hundreds of thousands of settlers,[3] who came to "The Last Best West" (Minister of the Interior, 1906),[4] the pioneer era was filled with misunderstandings, disappointments and backbreaking labour for which many were ill-prepared. As stated by Morton (1938, p. 82), the migrant and immigrant

---

[1] This scene graced the cover of the pamphlet issued by The North-West Canada Company, Limited (1880), while material published by the Minister of the Interior (1905) highlighted a bountiful 'Mother Nature' pouring kernels of wheat out of a 'horn of plenty' for the deserving settlers.

[2] Government advertising played heavily on the financial prospects available to settlers and frequently provided examples of farmers who, for example, had banked $4,000 or more in five years after paying for all of the improvements and equipment that had been purchased (Minister of the Interior, 1906).

[3] To review the dramatic increases in population and other demographics, see the tables set out in Appendix One. In particular, Table A reports on increases in population in the region which grew from 73,228 individuals in 1871 to 1,339,908 by 1911. Table B highlights the gender and adult/child differences over time with 532,342 men, 338,378 women, and 299,375 children (152,444 boys and 146,931 girls) being reported in 1911. Table C reports the number of families that existed on the prairies (with a total of 305,043 family groupings in 1911) while Table D notes the number of homestead entries (farm starts) made on the prairies between 1872 and 1913. Although there were hundreds of thousands of entries made during the study period, this does not mean that the process of creating a farm was an easy one. In some years, the number of cancellations (homesteaders giving up their land rather than continuing the effort to develop it) equaled or exceeded the entries (Martin, 1938). It is only by looking at the net impact of homesteading and the efforts of those wealthy enough to purchase land that progress can be seen. The fact that the area of the prairies held in farms grew from 2,698,000 acres to 57,643,000 acres between 1881 and 1911 shows that the efforts of these pioneers were not wasted, even though many did fail along the way (Urquhart and Buckley, 1965, Series L7-14).

[4] The phrase, 'the last best west' was likely derived from the fact that the farmlands of 'Canada West' (western Ontario) and the western United States were effectively filled by the 1890s and as such, the 'last west' to be settled was the prairies. The 'best' was presumably a matter of opinion and public relations.

population that surged onto the plains to participate in the rush for free land[5] were "entirely unaware of the difficulties which settlement in the Northwest was experiencing" and as such, he believed that they would have had a difficult time surviving the prairie conditions.[6]

Such pessimism was not surprising as the land was completely undeveloped and settlers had to begin their stay on the prairies by satisfying their most basic needs. Shelter was a necessity, but building a home meant backbreaking work for an extended period while trees were located, felled, trimmed, hauled to the site, notched and stacked into walls. All of this labour had to be done by hand, including the digging of a deep cellar under the house to store root crops. If a soddie[7] was being built in one of the many areas where few trees existed, the work would be just as difficult. Thousands of heavy sod blocks had to be cut out of the ground, hauled, and stacked like bricks to form walls and more had to be carried to build the roof.

---

[5] The Canadian government was intent on drawing settlers to the region as quickly as possible and thus copied the American free homestead system that had been successfully implemented for the settlement of the mid-west territories by President Lincoln in 1862. (Creighton, 1963). Under the Dominion Lands Act (1872), the western prairie region was surveyed using a system of quarter section parcels with free 160 acre homesteads being allocated in a checkerboard pattern primarily to male applicants at least 18 years of age who could pay the $10 registration fee.

[6] This lack of understanding was a likely result of the quantity of false information that was provided to potential settlers by the federal government and the Canadian Pacific Railway Company (the "CPR"). Clifford Sifton and Frank Oliver, successive Ministers of the Interior in the federal government, believed that the only way to convince millions of people to enter a strange land was to use 'hard sell' techniques. As such, numerous brochures and pamphlets filled with exaggerations and misleading information were distributed by the government, the CPR and land settlement companies. Statements alleged that the climate was ideal for farming and the winters were reasonable, fuel was abundant, crop yields were phenomenal and it was virtually certain that settlers would become wealthy. Even prairie fires were discussed as advantageous events rather than a dangerous experience that could result in animal and human deaths as it was explained that the ash would be an efficient fertilizer for new growth (Minister of the Interior, 1905; Minister of the Interior, 1906; Minister of the Interior, 1909; CPR, 1884; The North-West Canada Company Limited, 1880; The Saskatchewan Homestead Company, Limited, 1884). Such advertising was discounted by researchers of the time. For example, while Henry Youle Hind (a geologist and co-leader of a government of Canada expedition to the western prairie region in 1857) believed that conditions in the area were suitable to settlement if necessary precautions were taken, he was concerned with what he believed were lies regarding temperature (Friesen, 1987). He wrote directly to the Governor-General, advised him that settlers were being attracted by dangerous misinformation, and stated that:

> …every death on the prairie which can be traced to immigration under the lure of false information is veiled manslaughter. Every pound taken from the Immigrants by similar information is veiled robbery. Every share consciously sold by a promoter or agent in companies formed under the glozing pictures embodied in the official 'Information for Intending Immigrants,' is a cruel swindle. Finally, every conscious inveigler of poor, uninstructed and *unprepared* immigrants to settle without foreknowledge, on free grant prairie farms under the aggregated attractions scattered throughout England by Sir Alexander Galt, is a man fit for the dock (emphasis in original document) (Hind, 1883, pp. 24-25).

In terms of productive labour, acres of sod had to be broken (or trees and brush felled and the roots destroyed) in order to prepare the land for the planting of crops. However, this was not an easy process as the thick mat of roots and dirt resisted being severed and rocks that might damage machinery had to be removed from the fields. The lack of mechanized ploughs made the task difficult and, as with all jobs at the time, labour intensive. On completion of breaking the sod, additional labour had to be invested in the fields as the land had to be harrowed to 'grind' the dirt into a finer mix that would support the wheat seed. Seeding by hand or mechanical seeder would follow. Whatever the volume of labour directed at crop production, having livestock or poultry on the farm also increased the family labour requirements as animals had to be fed, and watered, their stables, pens and coops cleaned, eggs collected, cows milked, cream separated and butter churned.

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[7] A soddie was a house constructed of layers of sod cut from the prairie and is discussed more fully in Chapter Four.

With the late summer would come the need to divert labour to harvesting tasks. Wild fruits would have to be collected for making jams and in addition, garden produce had to be picked or dug up, and stored or canned for consumption over the winter. Animals would be slaughtered and the meat preserved, hay cut, gathered and stacked to feed the animals over the winter, and market crops had to be harvested. The harvest season was thus extremely hectic and all available labour was needed to cut the wheat, tie the sheathes and stook the sheathes until threshing was complete.

In addition to all of the work that had to be done out of doors, domestic labour was also required if the family wished to eat decent meals, live in a clean and comfortable environment and wear clean clothing that was kept in good repair. This meant using many hours of labour each day, year round, to perform all of the necessary tasks. Wood or buffalo chips had to be chopped or found and hauled to the stove for burning, and fresh water (purified when necessary) had to be put into storage for use during the day.[8] Bread, cakes and pies had to be prepared and baked, vegetables cleaned, milk and butter chilled, meals cooked and the table set. Dishes also had to be washed and put away, floors swept or scrubbed, shelves dusted, clothes washed and ironed, beds made and clothes sewn or mended. Child-care would also be an additional burden.

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[8] Depending on the characteristics of their land and the area of the prairies they were located in, water might also have to be hauled from a nearby stream or loaded into barrels from an insect or algae infested slough five miles away (Rodwell, 1965).

Even though the list of jobs set out above does not cover every individual task that had to be performed on the farm each day, week, month and year, it is clear that no single person would have had the energy, skills or time to handle all of these matters completely and competently on a consistent basis. The working capacity of each individual was finite and as such, could only be applied to the completion of a certain number of hours of labour each day (and to fewer hours if the tasks were physically wearing) before it had to be replenished with food, water and rest. However, as seen above, even arranging for essential subsistence required the use of the settler's labour as the land was undeveloped and without conveniences. Literally every aspect of life from obtaining subsistence to producing marketable commodities relied upon the settlers' labour assets.

Given that homestead regulations allowed only three years to prove the farm functional,[9] long term success for the family thus meant organizing the homestead to generate the maximum possible output at the lowest possible cost.[10] As such, labour was divided between family members for efficiency and along gender lines due to cultural imperatives, with men handling the tasks related to financial survival such as caring for crops and livestock, while women's contributions were focused on providing family subsistence and handling the domestic sphere (Scott and Tilly, 1980; Sachs, 1983; Cohen, 1988).[11] However, a woman's ties to the home were sometimes broken at the husband's request when her labour was needed with the cash crop during busy times,[12] particularly during the harvesting season. The intensity of this labour effort on the part of men and women was confirmed by Davisson (1927) who stated that "I have seen these free-born men and women of the prairies work harder and more incessantly than men can be driven in penal settlements. I have seen their lanterns glimmer around the barns before daylight, and after it" (1927, p. 14).[13] In short, every waking moment was devoted to working on the farm to ensure title to their farms and to guarantee their continuing success.[14]

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[9] Homesteaders only had three years to prove their farming operation by building a home and breaking ten acres to crop each year if they wished to obtain free title to their 160 acres (Dawson and Younge, 1940). Also see The Dominion Lands Act (1872).

[10] Although they would have no government imposed deadline to meet, it is likely that similar pressures to develop the land as quickly as possible would also have affected those wealthy enough to purchase their land without using the homesteading program. Wealth would be no guarantor of survival under harsh conditions or in the event of disaster.

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[11] While a single man could potentially accomplish all of the necessary tasks on his own, albeit with no guarantee of success, it would be easier, and the chances of success greater, if the settler had a family (Warren, 1917; Stansell, 1976). Labour requirements could then be divided between family members, easing the burden on the male homesteader by shifting part of the pressure to his wife.

[12] See Kohl (1976), Sachs (1983), Ursel (1992), or Rollings-Magnusson (2000).

[13] As noted by Silverman (1980), wives on the Alberta frontier at the turn of the 19th Century did not live the life of leisure in the home that their city cousins hoped to enjoy. Rather, they "worked with the same intensity as men through the day" and in the evenings did the housework "traditionally assigned women" (1980, p. 95). These pioneer women worked side-by-side with their husbands and their efforts were necessary to the success of the farm.

[14] Despite the amount of work that had to be devoted simply to the creation and operation of prairie farms, settlers had further burdens to face in order to maintain their farms. Retailers, banks, and machinery dealers were able to charge virtually any price they wished for most items and services given that the settlers were in a captive market situation (Conway, 1984; Fowke, 1957; Innis, 1954). Such gouging was made worse by government imposed tariffs that increased the price of necessary goods by 25% on agricultural machinery, 35% on hardware items such as nails and screws, 20% on lumber and shingles and 25% on glass (Mackintosh, 1939; Easterbrook and Aitken, 1963). The CPR added to the problem by charging excessive shipping rates (Naylor, 1975a), while grain companies fixed the price that farmers could receive for their crop. Cheating was rampant as elevator agents under-weighed deliveries, assigned lower grades to the wheat to cut the price paid and colluded with other agents to restrict competition (Fairbairn, 1984; Gleave, 1991; Wilson 1978; and Knuttila, 1994). The combined result of the numerous financial manipulations by these entities

While men's work on prairie homesteads has been noted in the historical record, the economic importance of women's work was not recognized until it was researched by feminist-historians in the 1980s. In fact, at that time, many asserted that women's work was of extraordinary value. For example, Sachs (1983) and Scott and Tilly (1980) both argued that women's subsistence labour kept the family from starving while Cohen (1988) took this idea one step further and argued that the free provision of subsistence by a wife translated into either greater capital accumulation for the farm or greater profits for commercial capitalists who could extract funds from the operation. Others such as Kohl (1977) and Strong-Boag (1985) have investigated women's unpaid work, argued for recognition of its importance to family survival and economic development, and thus have made women's economic contributions part of the public record. Similar themes have also been emphasized by Ghorayshi (1989), Fox (1991) and Ursel (1992), who, like Sachs (1983), went on to note that despite its value, the work of women was never credited or visible outside of the family.

While such research into women's work has clarified the composition of the family labour system,[15] other theorists have argued that the work of other members of the family unit may be just as vital as the work of women. For example,

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imposed massive financial burdens on prairie settlers that were difficult to overcome. In fact, the situation eventually became so extreme, and farmers were so exploited, that they rebelled. They fought for new laws to control the unethical activities of the CPR and grain companies, established cooperative grain associations, took part in the 'Siege on Ottawa' in 1910, and established political parties that would represent their views (Gleave, 1991; Knuttila, 1994; Wilson, 1978).

Fontaine and Schlumbohm (2000), and Wallace, Dunkerley, Cheal and Warren (1994) indicate that the work performed by children is also a necessary aspect of family survival strategies. Others report children as being adaptable and capable of assuming more difficult roles as they gain experience and physical ability (Light, Hertsgaard and Martin, 1985; Neth, 1995) and as valuable components in the family labour pool (Tilly and Scott, 1987).

In fact, researchers have found that children may actually increase a family's level of market production by handling domestic and subsistence requirements so that adults can apply more time to productive activity (Kohl, 1976; Stansell, 1976), enhance family subsistence by gardening, hunting and caring for animals (Horn, 1994; Neth, 1995) and help to reduce the amounts spent on external goods or services (Reimer, 1986). Performing tasks that would otherwise have to be hired out would be particularly useful as children could provide inexpensive labour and become more skilled over time. Where land is available (particularly free land), children could represent a double value to parents as they might also eventually acquire homesteads of their own and thereby increase the wider family's fortunes (Levy, 1985; Sharif, 1993; Gjerde and McCants, 1995). Taking 'off farm' work and returning wages to the family (Symes and Appleton, 1986; Neth, 1995) or earning funds through entrepreneurial initiatives could also improve the chances for farm survival by providing the money necessary to pay for goods the family can

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[15] The situation for women has been 'clarified' in the sense that where women had once been virtually ignored in the historical record, research has confirmed their significance to their family's

not produce on its own. However, it should also be noted that children were not of economic worth alone. As indicated by Espenshade (1977), the value of children lies in both the emotional and economic spheres as children provide a sense of immortality, group ties, adulthood, fun, power, accomplishment, prestige, and morality through self-sacrifice at the same time as they add to the financial well being of the family.

Other theorists have also examined the work of children but from a different perspective. These investigations have attempted to explain why, if children were not paid for their labour contributions, they would continue to perform work for the family. Englemeyer (1995) and Ursel (1992) for example, attribute children's work to the historically produced patriarchal power possessed by men within the family structure, while in a similar vein Folbre (1982) notes that as head of the household, the male controls all property and other assets. In either event, the father's power enables him to issue orders as to the functions that other family members would carry out on pain of physical punishment or economic sanction. Fraad (1995) equates women and children to serfs who owed absolute obedience and support to the lord of the home who, once again, controlled all family assets.

For others, the relationship between parent and child was not viewed as exploitive. For example, Symes and Appleton (1986), Mendelievich (1979) and Nett (1988) argue that parental control over child labour is better explained as an aspect of the parent's duty to socialize their children. The parent's duty includes

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economic development and survival.

ensuring that their children accept the norms and conditions of their society, obtain necessary formal knowledge, are exposed to social customs, and receive training in the practical skills essential for survival. Assigning work to children would thus fulfill parental duty and support the family but given that children's efforts for the family, and family support for their children seem voluntary rather that directed, researchers such as Finch (1989) and Horn (1994) have focused on mutual familial obligations as an explanation for children's work. In a sense, the provision of labour by children would 'repay' the care and support that parents provide as the children grow towards competence, transforming the relationship into one of mutual dependence.[16]

It may be noted that both the socialization and obligation approaches to the issue of children's labour correspond to the social expectations of the study period. Historically, children had been seen as little different from adults once they reached an age at which they could undertake helpful work. Children were thus expected to contribute to their own and their family's welfare in whatever way they could. At various times, this custom was explained as a matter of religious compliance (Aries, 1970; Cunningham, 1995; Pollock, 1983), a philosophical position (Sommerville, 1982) or simply a matter of necessity (Cunningham, 1995; Sommerville, 1982). These views differed across cultures and across time but in terms of the Canadian farming situation, the socially accepted position among the English speaking majority was that children should work as labour would contribute to their morality, productivity and work ethic (Sutherland, 2000).

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[16] Hendrick (1997) argues that this sense of mutual obligation had been in evidence prior to the 20th century. The socially accepted ideal that children would assist their families shifted to an acknowledgment of 'childhood' as a period of learning and enjoyment in which work was seen as undesirable. Also see Cunningham (1995) who argues a similar point.

With respect to the use to which children's labour might have been put, all farming and domestic activities required a labour input of some sort. Whether the labour was used in picking rocks, caring for livestock, growing fruits and vegetables for consumption or running the home, every input was valuable in the struggle to overcome the harsh conditions of prairie life. Seeking out paid employment, increasing production of smaller items such as butter or eggs that could be sold to raise cash, or undertaking fur trapping in the winter, could add to the family coffers.

Intensified labour directed at subsistence activities could also prove profitable in the sense of saving valuable cash reserves for necessary items. Growing additional foods, undertaking extra expeditions into the bush to hunt for fruits and table game, or spending additional time chopping wood to save on the purchase of coal could all reduce the need to buy items from the market. Similarly, activities such as sewing, could save the family money. Skill with a needle and thread would mean spending less on manufactured clothing as bolts of cloth could be converted to use at a fraction of the cost. In addition, clothing could be repaired rather than replaced when feasible, thus effecting a further cost-saving or at least delaying the inevitable expenditure until the items were too damaged to salvage.

Taking care of younger brothers and sisters would also be a valuable use of children's labour as it would allow parents to undertake other farm chores.

Based on the foregoing, it is argued in this dissertation that although farm children[17] did not receive payment or documented recognition for their economic contributions, both boys and girls were expected to work and did in fact perform essential duties and necessary tasks that contributed to the success of farms and family survival. As such, children were in a position similar to that of women in that they worked hard to assist in achieving success, but they were treated as economically invisible labour on the farm. (It is this extension of feminist theory to the analysis of children's work, the revelation of an apparent gendered and aged division of labour that existed between the boys and girls, and the development of a system of classification (a typology) that organizes the labour contributions of pioneer children as a whole (rather than dealing with isolated tasks or aspects of the labour they provided), that are the primary contributions made by this research project.)

In arriving at this argument, this research concentrated on the following issues and questions:

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[17] As will be discussed more fully in Chapter Three, the term 'children' is given a particular meaning in this paper. It relates to those boys and girls between 4 and 16 years of age who lived on the prairies, wrote in English, and are included in this study group. As the majority of the population was originally from Great Britain, it would not be surprising to find that the majority of children in this study were from that background as well. The conclusions reached may not be generalized beyond the study population except to the extent that they deal with matters of work that are not specific to a particular culture or ethnic group.

1) Did the prairie farming culture of the settlement period accept the view that childhood was a special period during which children were in need of care and time to relax, or did they see children as capable of handling work responsibilities like adults?

2) Were children socialized to work? Did children feel obligated to work?
Were children forced to work under a patriarchal system? Why did children work?

3) Did children contribute their labour to the ongoing operation of family farms? If so, what type of work did they do?

4) Were there gender or age-based differences in the types of work performed?

5) Were children economically exploited[18] like women? Was the labour performed necessary and of importance to the farming venture? Were children paid or otherwise rewarded for their labour?

6) Can feminist theory regarding women's work be used to explain the labour of children? (ie. Were children unpaid, economically invisible labourers on pioneer farms?)

Analysis of the results of this study begins in Chapter Two with a discussion of the literature review that has been undertaken. This Chapter examines theories respecting social attitudes and beliefs that affected the use of children's labour and discusses motivations for why children worked. In addition, feminist theories with respect to women's work have been reviewed for the purpose of determining whether they might be extended to explain the 'invisible' or 'hidden' economic role of children. Chapter Three reviews the method used in this study to obtain information respecting the use of child labour. Private documents prepared by child pioneers that detailed their activities on prairie farms were located in archives in Calgary, Edmonton, and Lethbridge, Alberta and Saskatoon and Regina, Saskatchewan. The materials included diaries, memoirs, letters, poems, interviews, newspapers and any other materials that were relevant and contained first hand accounts of the settlement era. Study of these documents enabled a typology of children's work to be created and supported further analysis on the age and gender implications of the research.

Chapter Four reviews the need for and attitudes toward children's labour contributions on the prairies and opens the discussion of labour usage with reference to pre-production work, namely the construction of farm buildings. Chapters Five, Six, Seven and Eight detail the findings of the study in terms of the types of work that children performed in support of the operation of prairie farms. The Chapters are divided by the nature of the work reported, with Chapter Five detailing productive work in growing crops and raising livestock. Entrepreneurial activity to earn money for the farm is discussed in Chapter Six, while Chapter Seven deals with subsistence labour, that is, creating the means of physical survival for the family. Chapter Eight highlights domestic labour directed at the comfort and well-being of the family.

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[18] See Chapter Two for a discussion of theories of economic exploitation and invisibility as they apply to women and their unpaid work within and beyond the home.

The dissertation finishes with Chapter Nine, which provides a summary of the study and its results. It discusses the possibility that age and gender divisions of labour existed historically among farm children and provides an expanded explanation for the success of family farming in the prairie region. Further, as the revelations made by these children fit well with the feminist approaches dealing with the importance and invisibility of women's work, support is found for extending these theories to explain the role of children as well.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this Chapter is to review such theoretical writings as may cast light upon the issue of children's labour in historical farm settings. This was done in the hope of reaching an understanding of why children laboured for the benefit of their families, whether such labour was of value to the farming operation and if so, to explore the contributions that children's labour made to family farms. In addition, the possible rationales underlying the lack of payment for, and acknowledgement of, such children's economic contributions will be examined.

The Chapter begins with an analysis of theoretical positions that have explained children's work from two perspectives. Firstly, work has been seen as an issue of personal survival for the children based on societal concepts that viewed young children as capable and thus responsible for working for their own subsistence, and secondly as an issue of parental control. The latter approach suggests several possible explanations ranging from work as a response to male domination and control of the farm, to work being an aspect of the family socialization process, work as a matter of obligation between family members, and work executed to ensure family survival despite external exploitation and manipulation.

Section Two moves into a discussion of literature dealing with the issue of whether the contributions made by children were of value or benefit to family farming operations and Section Three explores theories related to explaining why the efforts of farm children have not been accounted for as part of the economic history of agricultural development in the prairie region of Canada. Approaches drawn from feminist theories that explain the lack of recognition of the work of wives in farming enterprises may be extended, extrapolated and applied to the situation of farm children. The Chapter concludes with a summarization of the theories related to children's work, contributions to farming, and a discussion of the impact that their work would have had on the success and survival of the family farm.

1a) Children's Work as an Issue of Personal Survival

The literature review of perspectives on childhood and the proper treatment of children revealed that over the past few centuries, attitudes in western-European societies, particularly in Great Britain, tended to swing between two competing perspectives. On the one hand, Aries (1970) indicated that some European societies pictured children as "little adults" (much was made of the fact that in paintings prior to the 13th century, children were shown in adult clothing engaging in adult activities),[19] who were born with less size, skill and power. However, it was believed that these small adults were capable of achieving sufficient abilities, while quite young, to begin working and contributing to their own support, and that of their families, from an early age. As an associated cultural pattern, parents were seen as having little emotional attachment to their offspring aside from providing moral direction and punishment as necessary (Aries, 1970).[20] This perspective was based at least partially on Protestant religious doctrines which suggested that children were born subject to inherent evil and thus had to be controlled until they were old enough to accept instruction in the teachings of the faith. By working these small individuals from an early age, a parent could ensure that no time existed for evil thoughts or deeds to come forward.

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[19] Both Pollock (1983, pp. 22-24) and Cunningham (1995, pp. 30-31) referred to the work of Philippe Aries as the classic statement of the thesis that 'childhood' (from the middle ages and until at least the 18th century) did not exist as a concept. Little distinction was made between 'big' and 'little' people and for this reason, there was no social proscription against encouraging or forcing children to work as adults from an early age.

Arie's approach was not accepted by Pollock (1983) who argued that no society could survive under the brutal and uncaring social practices implied by a thesis that children were evil and subject to constant abuse. Children raised in such conditions would be non-functional and incapable of maintaining a society and as such, Pollock suggested that the Aries approach was exaggerated. As stated by Pollock:

> The type of society a parent lives in will affect how that parent rears and treats a child; but it will not drastically alter the basic pattern. For example, the qualitative aspects of parental care (protection, love and socialization) will not be altered but the quantitative aspects (the kind of care and the type of training) may vary. Parental care has evolved as it has done in ape and human societies, because there was a need for that type of care. For parental care to have been as

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[20] In the patriarchal household, it was the duty of the father to break the will of the children and ensure that they recognized their subordinate position and grew to be hardworking, well-behaved and dutiful members of their church and state (Cunningham, 1995).

> drastically different in past societies as has been suggested, would mean parents acting in direct opposition to their biological inheritance. (1983, pp. 42-43).

In other words, Pollock was suggesting that the instinct within the majority of people was to provide at least a minimum of care and affection for children and as such, the cold clinical parenting described by Aries (1970) could not have existed. This would not mean that children could have, for example, avoided working but rather, that work would have been tailored with a recognition that a child was different from an adult, and reasonable labour would have been assigned accordingly.

Pollock's vision of a kinder world for children matched, to a degree, the doctrine of the Catholic church. Under this philosophy, children were viewed as a special class of dependant beings to be cared for and coddled by their parents until they developed sufficient reason and maturity to care for themselves (Cunningham, 1995). Unlike the harsh views of childhood based on Protestant conceptions, Catholic doctrine saw the relationship between parent and child as a caring one, primarily because the 'original sin' within the child was believed to be eliminated by baptism.[21] Further, much of the moral and social training of children was seen as the prerogative of the church and its schools rather than the family and as such, the home could be a more relaxed environment. Under this more enlightened Catholic perspective, it was recognized that childhood was a distinct period during which children could be trained for the responsibilities of adulthood rather than sent out to work as if their minds and bodies were ready to carry an adult's burdens.

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[21] The doctrines respecting the treatment of the concept of original sin (the defiance of God and eviction from the Garden of Eden) were different between the Catholic and Protestant churches. Sin purportedly passed from parent to child and for Protestants, could only be eliminated by membership in the church, faith in God and acceptance of church doctrine. Catholics believed that this sin was washed away by baptism and children were thus innocents until they chose their own path.

As with many other religious and traditional principles, the concepts of childhood and child care underwent major revisions during the 18th century as rationality and the principles of science and investigation came to dominate western-European cultures. This altered the way in which children were treated, if not the way they were perceived, particularly in Britain (Sommerville, 1982; Pollock, 1983; Cunningham, 1995; Hendrick, 1997). In place of the religious attitudes toward children that had prevailed, John Locke introduced a philosophy which held that each person, including a child, should be seen as a rational individual. Each individual would thus be responsible for their own life and actions, guided by logic and reasoning rather than instinct and God's will. However, this new philosophy did have limitations in that while children were recognized as being potentially rational beings, they were in need of education to establish their ability and moral character. Some periods of play would be included to relieve boredom but in so far as 'work' or 'working' was not an aspect of the learning process, Locke's philosophy was of little practical worth to those in need of their children's labour for survival (Sommerville, 1982; Cunningham, 1995).[22]

By the late 1700s, Jean-Jacques Rousseau reversed John Locke's philosophy of childhood by emphasizing greater freedom for all individuals including children (Sommerville, 1982). Children were seen, in effect, as natural free spirits that should not have been caged at studies or work but rather, left loose to play, experience life and absorb the knowledge needed to mature in a natural fashion. This truly radical departure from previous conceptions of proper childrearing was totally out of touch with the needs of families without independent means and as with Locke's views, could only be adopted by the wealthy. However, Rousseau did open the door to a consideration of children as precious beings and increased the social pressure to view childhood as a special time in the lifecycle. This perspective grew in strength throughout the 19th century as evidenced by the creation of toys and entertaining stories for children, the growth of medical specialties devoted to childhood ailments, and ultimately, by the end of the 19th century, a kind of glorification of children (Sommerville, 1982). However, at the same time, the Industrial Revolution that had begun in the late 18th century in Britain led to the ironic situation where "the greatest exploitation of children coincided with the greatest glorification of childhood" (Sommerville, 1982, p. 160).

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[22] Locke's philosophy of responsibility and rationality, as it applied to children, seemed suspiciously similar to the Protestant belief in keeping children out of mischief by working them

In other words, the major economic changes associated with industrialized factory production once again split the perspective on children and childhood. The trend toward strong emotional attachment to children and their removal from the 'adult' field of work continued in the upper levels of British society but necessity moved attitudes in the opposite direction for the working population. Primary production by family units waned while urban employment in the factories grew and where families could once work together, industrialization made each person within the family a separate employee regardless of age.

As noted by Gaffield (1984), families that remained on the farm could continue to work together as an economic unit but for families in the cities, adult wages were low enough that few could afford the luxury of keeping children out of the work force. Children began work as early as the age of seven when the family had piece work that could be handled in the home. Employment at the age of ten in a factory or other setting outside of the home was not uncommon (Cunningham, 1995). In fact, as children could be paid less than adults (due to their lack of skills), they were the preferred source of labour for many factory and mine owners (Sommerville, 1982). In some instances, children were responsible for as much as one-third of the total family income (Cunningham, 1995). However, by the mid-1800s in England, the use of child labour in factories was becoming an issue of child protection for those in the upper levels of society who saw children as

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hard. The only distinction between the two was that 'Locke's children' studied hard and played little while the Protestant system worked children hard and allowed little play.

precious rather than as wage earners and laws were passed prohibiting children under nine years of age from working at all and limiting the hours of work for those under fourteen to eight hours per day (Cunningham, 1995, p. 140). This legislation confirmed the fact that children, at least up to age fourteen, were different from other workers.

The end result of these various changes was that by the late 1800s, there was a growing recognition in Great Britain that childhood was a special time in the development process during which children should not be exposed to the pressures of adult life. This attitude permeated the wealthier tiers of British society but the children of the poor, and farm children, continued to work to support their families and themselves (Sommerville, 1982). In fact, the use of children's labour in farming situations remained widespread, with work beginning at age six or seven (Cunningham, 1995) or even earlier where the need existed (Sommerville, 1982). As such, the attitude transferred to Canada with British immigrants was somewhat schizophrenic. The view of children's work and status differed substantially between those with the wealth to keep their children out of the workforce and those who had little choice but to send their offspring into a factory for a wage or out into the fields to help with seeding if their family was to survive.

Based on the findings of Sutherland (2000), the situation in the English-speaking regions of Canada in the late 19th Century was not as divided as in Britain. Rather than taking on the perspective that children were sources of joy to be protected from work in the real world, most English-speaking Canadians possessed attitudes more akin to those of British farmers and the poor.[23] Children's labour was of importance to the family economy and as such, parents viewed this labour as necessary and tried to impart useful skills and a strong work ethic in their children. Further, in accordance with the apparent norms of British-Canadian society, parents attempted to control their children's behavior until they were mature enough to act properly without supervision, by keeping them too busy to misbehave. On the farm, this attitude toward children's labour meant constant work for the children as their parents attempted to "fashion moral, hard-working, productive adults" out of children assumed to be naturally lazy and decadent (Sutherland, 2000, p. 11).

This perspective on childhood began to change in the late 1890s as women's groups in the cities (largely populated by middle class British-Canadians) organized to encourage improvements in the "health, education and welfare of children" (Sutherland, 2000, p. 15). Initially, this battle was limited to assisting children employed within the growing factories and shops located in the cities. Unions took up the fight as well to limit the hours worked by children and to impose a minimum age law (perhaps selfishly to remove children as low-paid competition for jobs) while educators pressed for (and between 1890 and 1920, received) laws making school attendance mandatory. In effect, the turn of the century saw the beginning of a revision in the way children were dealt with in the urban areas of British-Canadian society but these attitudes were slow to spread among farming families where children's labour was necessary for the smooth operation of family farms (Sutherland, 2000, p. 17).

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[23] Sutherland (2000) indicated that few Canadians, (particularly farmers), could afford the luxury of children who did not contribute to the family income.

Based on all of these factors, the cultural attitudes imported by settlers of British origin were such that the use of children's labour in family farming operations on the prairies would have been the expected norm. In fact, in a business as labour-intensive as pioneer farming,[24] it is difficult to imagine that the situation could be otherwise. The labour of children was needed and the dominance of British Canadian farmers in the prairie region, and the practical need for labour, ensured that this attitude would reign supreme.[25]

This same attitude was also found to prevail in studies conducted in other agricultural communities. For example, Craig's (1993) comparative study of labour among eastern, western and mountain dwelling children in pre-civil war America determined that most children over four years of age worked on their family's farms.[26] This was confirmed by a 1985 study of farm families in a mid-western state conducted by Light, Hertsgaard and Martin (1985). Based on responses to 2,000 questionnaires, they concluded that 63 per cent of four-year-old children performed domestic chores while 23 per cent were handling farm work.

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[24] Farming techniques and equipment will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter Four.

[25] Given the sheer number of immigrants and migrants with British origins in the prairie region, their perspectives would have played a large role in forming the agrarian consensus and thus the attitudes that would come to permeate the region. This included British attitudes toward children and work. As Danysk put it, "[f]arming was regarded as more than an economic endeavour. It was a way of life that provided the underpinning of an entire social system" (1995, p. 22).

The percentage participating increased with age until by age eleven, 100 per cent of the children were doing farm work and helping with domestic labour. The trend on domestic work reversed by age thirteen as children spent more time on farm labour but even so, it seems clear that an attitude supportive of children's farm labour prevailed in the United States. The use of children in a working capacity has also remained part of the family farm labour cycle in western Canada. As reported by Kohl (1976), based on a study of farming families in Saskatchewan in the 1962 to 1972 period, children as young as eight years old were expected to contribute their labour to meeting farm goals and by the time children reached the age of thirteen or fourteen, a full day's work was expected of them. Work was assigned based on skill levels and abilities but all were expected to provide labour on the family farm.

In short, the cultural attitudes toward childhood that prevailed among farmers of British origin in the late 1800s were such that in the farming community, an expectation existed that children would begin contributing to family work at a young age. Where children in an urban setting might not have commenced working and contributing to the family income until they were at least seven to ten years old, farm children did not have to leave the home to begin making a contribution and thus began working with the family as soon as they were capable.

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[26] Craig (1993) also found that children seven or more years old made a positive economic contribution to the farm through their labour.

1b) Work as an Issue of Parental Control: Patriarchal Domination, Socialization, Familial Obligation, and Family Economic Strategies

i) Patriarchal Domination

In compelling children to accede to social expectations, the utilization of threats and punishments to force them to work for the betterment of the farming operation was a logical outcome of the organization of power relations within families in the 19th century. Historical processes, social norms, and the laws that developed out of a combination of these factors clearly ensured that the male head of a family effectively had absolute power over his wife and children (Folbre, 1982; Ursel, 1992; Rollings-Magnusson, 1999).[27] As the head of the household, the husband and father tended to be registered formally as the owner of all property, money and other assets[28] and was seen as having a duty to maintain discipline within the family. This included the right to use physical discipline on children, a right that had long been protected by religious beliefs and the law.[29]

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[27] Hamilton (1988) argued that while men have historically dominated women, the relationship may also be considered as one of interdependence. Women may rely on a man's income but in return, the man must rely upon the woman for subsistence and reproduction. Thus, both men and women are centrally located within the family.

[28] It is interesting to note that as late as 1974, the Supreme Court of Canada ruled that a woman who had devoted her life to working on a ranch with her husband was not entitled to share in the value of the property. All assets were registered in the husband's name in accordance with their family's practice of having the husband deal with financial matters and although the wife thought herself a partner of her husband on the farm, the court ruled otherwise. The majority of the judges stated that the work she did (caring for the home, running the operation for several months each year while her husband was away, taking part in haying, driving machinery, working with horses, transporting cattle, and branding and vaccinating the herd), were things that were expected of ranch wives and were no reason to suggest that she might be in a ranching partnership with her husband when all of the assets were in his name (Murdoch v. Murdoch (1974) 13 R.F.L. 185 (S.C.C.).

[29] Defining the physical punishment of a child as an acceptable act may have been based on the religious beliefs of the Protestant and Catholic faiths that interpreted the Biblical passage in

This combination of cultural, religious, economic and legal authority in the patriarch made the position very powerful and given this, orders to work could be supported with a believable threat that force or some other punishment would be used to ensure compliance.

The nature and effect of this form of power over children has been studied by Engelmeyer (1995)[30] who concluded that with the degree of control possessed by men within family structures, the appropriation of the surplus labour produced by children would not be a difficult process. Given that the absolute power of men within families declined through the 20th century (Ursel, 1992), the position of children would have been even more precarious during the study period. Children had limited rights to own property and retain the wages they might earn from working outside of the family. Further, they were dependent on their fathers for food, shelter and other necessary items and therefore in a weak position relative to them. Under such conditions, Engelmeyer (1995) noted that the product of the collective labour of the family could be distributed at the discretion of the father as owner of the land, equipment and home and no one else in the family would have had the power to alter the decision.

Proverbs 22:15 ("Foolishness is tied in the heart of a child, but the rod of discipline shall drive it away") to authorize beatings (Cunningham, 1995). The protection of the 'right' to discipline continues to the present time in the form of section 43 of the Criminal Code (1985) that allows a parent or teacher to use reasonable force to correct a child.

[30] Engelmeyer's (1995) conclusions respecting male power within farm families were based on her analysis of data generated by the 1983 Census of Agriculture conducted across the United States plus data sets prepared by other researchers including Rosenfeld's 1980 survey of farm women, Sachs's 1983 survey, and records of personal experiences written by other female researchers with a farming background.

Fraad (1995) equated people in such a situation to medieval serfs with the father as the lord of the domain. The serfs owed absolute obedience, their labour and their emotional support to the lord and his mistress (although the mistress too produced for the lord). In return, the feudal lord promised love and protection. The mutual, but unequal, obligations between family members thus maintained the family link but at the financial level, the work of the children was expropriated by the patriarch as they had no control over the products of their labour and were not paid for their efforts. While such activity within families may not meet the definition of exploitation in the original Marxist sense,[31] Folbre (1982) argued that it was equivalent to exploitation and should be understood in that fashion.[32]

In a family, the wages earned (or in the case of farmers, the funds taken out of operations) had to be sufficient to pay all expenses necessary to keep the farmer, spouse and children alive. In a sense, the farmer 'paid' the spouse and children for caring for him and ensuring that he was capable of producing his crops each day (in other words, reproducing his labour power) by using funds derived from farm sales to buy necessities such as food and clothing for the home. However, if the farmer as patriarch of the family decided to divide the wealth produced on the farm in such a way that the funds applied to subsistence were not sufficient to 'pay' the cost of support for the spouse and children, then the farmer could be said to have underpaid or exploited the labour of his spouse and children. They toiled to produce the food, clean clothes, water, heat and shelter that the farmer utilized and while a family did not operate on the basis of monetary exchange or payment for services rendered, working together to produce cash crops and subsistence products would seem to suggest that all family members would have benefited, not just the father. As noted by Folbre (1982, p. 323), the inequality produced by law and custom may have been disguised by social inventions suggesting that the work of children and wives was 'voluntary' or the product of "intangible and emotional aspects of family life" but she went on to argue that for Marxist theorists, "the most important lessons…[are] that inequality is often disguised and obscured by ideology, and the material context of 'free choice' requires careful scrutiny."

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[31] Exploitation may be understood as an appropriation of surplus labour produced by workers to the benefit of capital. Surplus labour, or the value of the labour performed by the worker over and above the value of socially necessary labour time (the minimal wage necessary for the worker to reproduce him or her self) becomes the property of capital as a result of the power imbalance between capital and labour. This imbalance is an artifact of the possession of capital that allows owners to dictate the terms of employment, including the wage rate (Marx, 1976).

[32] The opposite argument suggesting that children could only be exploited if they worked outside of the family, was advanced by Mendelievich (1979). She stated that as work within the family was an aspect of traditional socialization processes required to bring children to adulthood, it could not be defined as exploitive or oppressive. Similarly, Goodman (1985) and Redclift (1986) argued that free labour was a natural function of the family and as such, class relations were irrelevant within the family system. In other words, exploitation within the family was an impossibility.

ii) Socialization

In essence, socialization was the process of preparing children to accept and be ready for life as responsible adult members of society. In the case of farm children, this might have meant taking over the operation of the family farm as the child's parents grew too old to handle the work load, leaving to establish a new farming operation or departing to take on a different occupation (Symes and Appleton, 1986). As females (at least those living in southern Saskatchewan), were unlikely to inherit land for farming, socialization for them meant acquiring the skills and attitudes necessary to accepting marriage to a farmer, or to taking up an occupation in which the more domestic skills were of value (Bennett, Kohl and Binion, 1982).[33] In either event, during the period of settlement of the Canadian prairies, the only realistic options for many children as they reached their majority were to continue farming for the family, work as a hired hand, farm their own land, or travel to a city and find work that did not require a great deal of education.

This parental obligation, to 'teach' children and ensure that they would have as much formal knowledge as the parents, a grasp of the practical skills used in the family business, and a grounding in social customs, has been recognized in most cultures that were not based on communal care of children (Mendelievich, 1979).[34] Further, this family duty existed in most historical periods, subject to the limitation that families have been expected to socialize their offspring to the norms and conditions of the society in which they lived, not to an abstract ideal constant across time and cultures (Cunningham, 1995).

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[33] It is interesting to note that for at least one group of females, inheritance of land and other farming assets (or their equivalent in money) was encouraged rather than having all of the productive assets pass to sons who would continue the family operation and name. Mennonite families (communally organized to a degree by their religious beliefs) passed ownership of property through the entire family, including the females (Loewen, 1993). This practice was based on the beliefs (and occasionally religious laws) of the church that women should not be deprived of an equal share of family property, and the status and sense of ownership it gave, on the whim of her spouse. Caring for children may have required that women would spend "more time in the houses and farmyards, and less time in the grain field" but unlike the British common-law legal system adopted in Canada, church laws saw to it that women were not prejudiced by playing the traditional female role (Loewen, 1993, p. 39).

[34] Bekombo (1981) provided the example of Africa where, in many nations, social organization tended to be based on clan or lineage structures rather than physical location as part of a village or other artificially defined grouping. In such cultures, socialization was treated as a community duty rather than being left solely to the parents as all members believed that they were related to each child and that it was best for the community as a whole to ensure the best upbringing. All contributed to shaping the skills and willingness to work of the children so that when they became adults, they would be able to survive and contribute to the well being of the community as well.

In terms of the socialization process, formal instruction played a role where specific rituals or rules were required for expected activities but primarily, socialization has been seen as informal and driven by experience obtained from contact with family members and others in the community (Nett, 1988).[35] Through socialization, children acquired language, subconsciously developed a sense of how family relationships and contact with non-family members operated, and learned social taboos and expectations (Nett, 1988). Gender roles were also transmitted by observation and interaction (Gaskell, 1993), as were basic cultural beliefs, values, morals, and attitudes toward work and responsibility (McDaniel and Tepperman, 2000). The development of physical ability and skills, however, required practical application for incorporation to occur.[36] Thus, as noted by Warren (1917, pp. 8-9), "[one] great advantage of farming as compared with city life is that the farm furnishes work for children" or in other words, unlike those raised in a city, children socialized to the farming life would not long be without gainful employment given the skills and attitudes acquired during childhood, particularly as they might one day buy a farm of their own.

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[35] Margolis (1993) argued that the process began to change in the 19th century as production moved outside of the family and women became more isolated with their children in the home. The burden of both physically producing children and preparing them mentally to participate in society became the responsibility of mothers. This may not have been evident on the prairies where production and home life continued to intersect but a gendered division of labour was an aspect of farm life (Gaskell, 1993) and women may thus have been expected to spend more time than men in socializing the children given their proximity in the home.

[36] According to Warren (1917, pp. 4-5), acquiring the manual dexterity necessary to farming was a long process of training and repetition best done during childhood. "Milking, using a saw, using an ax, and a thousand other manual operations are hard for a grown person to learn. The time to train the muscles is when they are young."

In socializing children to the work process, Mendelievich (1979, p. 3) found in her 1979 study of child labour in developing countries that families who operated small businesses (including farms) and taught the children to participate were, in effect, providing an on-the-job training experience. In such a setting:

> the child grew to physical and intellectual maturity without ill treatment and virtually without being exploited, and was simultaneously prepared for adult life. Work of this kind was practically free from harmful effects. It can be likened to those present-day tasks which by nature are light, sporadic, interesting, educational and socially useful and which serve to integrate the child in the social life of the group to which [they] belong.

Clearly, this argument would apply to children socialized through work on a farm, possibly with the exception of referring to the work as light or sporadic. Depending on the task performed, the labour would presumably be quite exhausting and in working with animals and crops, a regular pattern of work was required.[37] Even so, working at various tasks, presumably with the father if tasks

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[37] As discussed by Doris Thomson (1979) in her memoir, projects on their farm near Saskatoon, Saskatchewan requiring major labour inputs tended to cycle through a seasonal pattern. For example, spring was a time for cleaning the home of its accumulated winter grime, planting gardens and beginning a new crop year by giving machinery a final check and loading seed. This work flowed into the summer pastimes of:

> pulling weeds, knocking off potato bugs and eating those fresh young carrots where you just rubbed of some of the dirt on your sleeve! Then came berry picking- those tiny wild strawberries that were oh so delicious but took forever to pick- the scratches and torn clothes from scrambling around in a raspberry patch- finding new cranberry

beyond the home were involved, and with the mother if more 'domestic' work was being performed, allowed for the "transmission of skills [and] the evolution of attitudes to work" that could prove helpful in the future (Rogers and Standing, 1981, p. vi). The process was effectively an apprenticeship in farm work and management, and the perceived future benefits of acquiring this knowledge may have been sufficient to ensure diligence on the part of the children involved. Alternatively, the very fact that work was made a regular part of a child's experience from an early age may have made anything less than the proper completion of a task seem unnatural. Either surmise would arguably be a more persuasive explanation for the apparent voluntary nature of children's work than threats alone.

> bushes or trying to reach the top branches of a chokecherry or wild plum tree (because the best fruit is always at the top) and picking the ends off gooseberries and currants (Thomson, 1979, pp. 1-2).

Summer finished with haying to obtain supplies for livestock for the winter season and a marathon effort to make jam, jelly and preserves out of the fruit harvest. The job was accompanied by the liberal use of the phrase "you'll appreciate all this next winter" to both encourage those with falling energy levels, and to promote the acceptance of delayed gratification of the urge to consume the fruit while fresh (Thomson, 1979, p. 2).

With the beginning of fall came the harvest of the market crop and the garden, making it the busiest season for all family members given the variety of tasks that had to be accomplished. Grain had to be cut, hauled to the threshing location and then sold, and the threshing crew had to be fed. Vegetables were stored in the root cellar or canned. Extra eggs were stored in stone jars that would remain somewhat cool and near the end of fall, a pig would be slaughtered so that salt pork could be prepared and hams cured. The winter, of course, was a struggle between the cold and the stamina of those assigned to haul the firewood that had been cut in the summer and fall from the woodpiles and into the house. Snow also had to be collected and brought to the water tank attached to the stove to be melted and held for bath water. The winter season also provided time for machinery to be repaired, for the livestock to be watered and fed, and for "quilting, knitting, mending and sewing" to be done so that the family would be ready to start the cycle again in the spring (Thomson, 1979, p. 3). As such, each season had its form of heavy urgent labour that had to be performed, whether productive or otherwise, and other tasks were completed around the schedule for the seasonal task. In this way, all necessary labour could be performed at the appropriate time and the farm family would have the best chance of maintaining their farm as an ongoing operation.

iii) Familial Obligation

The development of moral obligations within the family that could act as a stimulus to work for the good of other family members, was studied by Hendrick (1997). He argued that English societal beliefs, expectations and understandings of the claims and expectations that families and children had on, and of each other, shifted over time. The late Victorian and early Edwardian eras witnessed a slow change from a social view of a child as an economic asset available for family utilization to the child as an "'emotional and affective' asset" to be coddled and raised without economic expectations or work-related activities (Hendrick, 1997, p. 10). The child, once believed obligated to support the family in a pattern of "reciprocal rights and responsibilities" under which labour could 'buy' the love and affection of the parents, became loved for its existence. Support obligations thus burdened only the parents, as it was no longer socially acceptable that these obligations be mutual (Hendrick, 1997, p. 20).

For Finch (1989) however, the mutual obligations within families were not so easily disposed of. Even under conditions extant during her study of kinship groups in modern Britain (with smaller families than in historical periods, a fully developed school system and laws against children's labour), obligations continued to accrue. She took the position that although the intervention of the state in the late 1800s to force children out of the filthy, dangerous workplace and into schools made "it difficult for children to contribute to their own support, let alone the support of other people", this only delayed the reciprocal nature of the relationship

(Finch, 1989, p. 72). Rather than the pattern of mutual dependence and support found in previous generations,[38] children were forced into "one-way dependence… on their parents" but when they reached adulthood themselves, they began to fulfill their accumulated "duty, obligation or responsibility" by re-entering the stream of mutual physical, emotional, monetary or other support with their parents (Finch, 1989, pp. 72, 3).

While the beliefs and expectations of the British urban society were apparently changing at the turn of the 19th century, Hendrick (1997) suggested that the situation was somewhat different from the perspective of the English rural dweller for whom the relative financial costs and benefits of children may have been more important and for whom the family business was also the family lifestyle. In such circumstances, "children universally made a domestic and economic contribution to the family economy" (Hendrick, 1997, p. 20). Indirect evidence also suggests that the social shift toward eliminating economic considerations from the parenting process did not permeate the agricultural sphere to the same extent as the urban. Research conducted by Symes and Appleton (1986), respecting more modern mechanized farming operations (where it would presumably be easier to keep children out of the labour pool given the availability of machinery to reduce the amount of physical work required) suggests that farmers have continued to train their children for farming. These children contributed to the production of cash crops, meat, milk and poultry products for the market, food for the family and also handled domestic duties (Symes and Appleton, 1986), just as children did in Britain while attitudes were changing in the cities during the late 1800s (Cunningham, 1995).

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[38] Finch (1989) argued that family ties were built on mutual support obligations between parents and children that created an emotional bond and sense of obligation to the immediate family and

From a Canadian settler perspective, conditions on the prairies, in terms of the amount of labour required to operate a farm, would have been no better than in England (where many of the settlers entering the prairies originated). In fact, the demand for labour power was more likely to be higher on the prairies as farms had to be built up literally from nothing. As such, the probability that pioneer families would adopt the new fashion of coddling their children over utilizing their labour power as a matter of course, would be low. For many, there would have been little choice but to use all available resources tied to the operation.

For example, Silverman's (1984, pp. 15-16) interviews with surviving Alberta pioneers revealed that for these settlers who had been children on the prairies, "obedience and obligation became the nexus of family life" and the "children's labour was essential to the productivity and the psychological cohesiveness of the family". Under such circumstances and under a belief system based on the existence of reciprocal obligation between parent and child, such a choice would not reflect any degree of evil or reprehensible conduct on the part of the parents, simply an acceptance of the reality of the situation. Encouraging

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kinship group. As each generation raised new children the kinship group expanded but the strength of the obligation weakened as the degree of consanguinity declined.

children to work could even prove to be helpful as Horn (1994) indicated that for the children, contributing to the family income was a source of personal pride and a strengthening of the bond to the family.[39] This strengthening was confirmed by Wallace, Dunkerley, Cheal and Warren (1994) who found that parental dependency on child labour created a reciprocal duty or obligation for the children to continue their support.

iv) Economic Exploitation and Family Economic Strategies

In discussing the potential influence of patriarchal control on the work of farm families, the possibility of viewing the actions of the father as being an aspect of exploitation of his children's labour was examined. The logical precursor to this reasoning, that forces external to the farm family were exploiting the father and were thus ultimately responsible for the harm suffered within the family, was not raised but given the information available respecting the negative economic conditions on the prairies and the activities of unscrupulous profiteers, it must be considered.[40]

In a classical open market, free of special influence and monopoly,[41] prices for materials required on a farm and the value obtainable for farm produce would, in theory, reach a balance dependent on supply and demand. This balance point would be based on each of the farmer, the material vendor and the grain dealer making sufficient profit on the transactions to pay for the goods necessary for their own reproduction and that of their family plus a margin for the replacement of depreciated equipment, reinvestment or savings. However, this balance would shift unfairly with the introduction of preferential treatment for some participants as bargaining power would replace economic factors in establishing a new equilibrium in the market.

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[39] In their study of American families, White and Brinkerhoff (1981) also concluded that parent-child bonds, based on mutual duties between the generations, acted to link the members of families into a unit.
[40] The economic barriers faced by prairie settlers are set out in Chapter One.

As the impact of Federal Government policies was to encourage the development of the prairies as a captive market subject to monopoly pricing,[42] it is clear that the market in the Canadian prairie region was deliberately unbalanced. The settlers, as individuals without bargaining power, paid the price of preference and monopoly to central and eastern Canadian interests. On the surface, the market was 'free' and thus an agreement could be sought with any participant if a settler felt for example, that a particular implement dealer, grain company or bank was gouging their customers. However, without true competition, fair prices could not be achieved. Thus, as argued by Phillips (1985), the wealth created by settler labour was appropriated by those given an unfair advantage and farmers were left in a position equivalent to that of exploited workers.

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[41] See a discussion of Adam Smith and David Ricardo's theories as set out in Howlett and Ramesh (1992).

[42] A detailed discussion of the creation of the captive prairie economy is provided by Conway (1984), Fowke (1957), Mackintosh (1939), Naylor (1975b), and Buckley (1958). (This position is questioned by theorists such as Norrie (1979)).

With respect to theories of exploitation on a resource frontier, Deere (1979) looks to research conducted in Central America in the 1970s. Her insight, that the exploitation of a husband could in turn affect the wife (and possibly the family, although Deere did not address the point in any detail), appears to be applicable to the situation of prairie farmers three-quarters of a century earlier. In effect, the economy studied by Deere was a resource (staple) based periphery in the process of being harvested by companies associated with a central industrialized economy, much as the prairies were during the study period. Her theory is not directly applicable to the prairie situation as the subjects of her study were employed by resource companies and as wage earners, could suffer exploitation in the classic sense. However, in that their homes and families were located in rural areas where they could provide their own subsistence support by growing much of their own food, they were similar to prairie settlers in some respects.

Under these circumstances, Deere (1976) proposed an extension of Marxist theory that would explain how a woman's labour power could be indirectly expropriated even though she was not involved in the employment market. She argued that although the exploitation was accomplished indirectly through the inequitable underpayment of the woman's husband, the process affected the amount of work the woman had to perform in sustaining the home and reproducing labour for the marketplace. The husband's wage was insufficient to pay the cost of reproducing himself and his family, and thus, was less than the necessary social wage required to maintain the capitalist system. However, by intensifying her work efforts, a wife could manage to provide subsistence for the family via a garden and by collecting edible plants from the wild, thus making up for the wage shortfall outside of the regular economy.[43] Deere (1976, p. 12) referred to this process as "super-exploitation" and presumably, if there were children in the household who took part in growing food or otherwise contributed to the total family labour directed at satisfying subsistence needs, they would also be exploited through this process.

In extrapolating Deere's theory for application to the Canadian prairies, the appropriation of wealth through market manipulation is equated to resource company exploitation of its employees and the work of pioneer women (and children) on the farm was almost identical to that performed by the wife in the study. Thus, women and possibly children may be said to have supported the viability of family farms that in turn supported the growth of the agricultural economy of the prairies and the industrializing economy of the rest of Canada.

Other theorists have also addressed this issue and come to similar conclusions including Cohen (1988) who argued that the non-market labour of women provided effectively free subsistence and thereby reduced the amounts that had to be used or paid to ensure reproduction of the farmer/worker and his family. This 'saving' translated into funds that did not have to be spent and thus into either greater capital accumulation on the farm itself or alternatively, into a 'wage' saving that allowed for greater profits to capitalists.[44] In either case, the effect could only occur if the labour of the wife remained unpaid. As such, either the husband had to exploit the wife's surplus labour directly by 'paying' less than market value for her efforts to reproduce the labour of the family, or external capitalists could exploit her labour indirectly by manipulating the market for goods and services associated with the farm enterprise to reduce the sums retained by the farmer for use on the farm or for the family.

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[43] As the farm wife's work in providing subsistence for the family was never taken into account in the regular economic market, it was 'extra' or 'surplus' to the system. Because of this 'free' additional family support (there was no recorded cost), the farmer survived to interact with the capitalist economy despite capital having broken the 'economic law' by failing to allow the farmer to retain sufficient profit to ensure that the labour supply survived and was reproduced.

Naturally, extraordinary efforts by wives could be explained as labour donated to the husband and family out of love, duty or family obligation (Bennett, Kohl and Binion, 1982) or as a matter of self-interest to increase the 'family' income in which she shared (Whatmore, 1991; Cohen, 1988). However, given the possibility that patriarchal control could be the actual inspiration for such 'unselfish acts' by farm wives and Folbre's (1982) admonition that the truth may be obscured by the ideology or appearance of the 'loving family', these explanations cannot be accepted without question. They do gain credibility as logical reasons for the actions of wives when their families are subject to external economic assault as survival could depend on each individual in the family unit working for the good of the whole. In such circumstances, self-preservation or a sense of love, duty or obligation would act as strong motivators.

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[44] Fox (1980) reached a similar conclusion with respect to families in which the husband was employed by a company rather than working a farm. The costs associated with the domestic sphere could be reduced by avoiding the purchase of commodities and services and substituting intensified labour in their place. For example, cooking rather than consuming purchased foods and cleaning the home rather than hiring a domestic servant would limit the amount of the husband's wage devoted to such concerns, thereby allowing capital to reduce wages and increase profits without risking the loss of the labour supply over the long term.

Thus, Tilly and Scott (1987, p. 6) have suggested that in times of economic change or crisis, such a willingness to work in the family interest could be described as a "family economic strategy". Under such a strategy,[45] the family would adapt itself to new conditions either by changing its consumption patterns to reduce the strain on necessary subsistence items, or by adjusting its internal distribution of labour to accomplish more or work harder or both. Generally, adjustments would occur in the activities undertaken by women exercising their flexibility to fulfill their "family responsibility" (Tilly and Scott, 1987, p. 4).[46]

While Tilly and Scott were studying the reactions of families in British and French societies as the industrial revolution progressed (moving families from an agricultural base under which 'all' family members worked together, to an industrial base in which production became individualized away from the home), the principal may logically be applied to the farms of the Canadian prairies. The shift to pioneering a new agricultural region would certainly have adjusted the work patterns into which families had fallen before entering the west, and given the deliberate effort to appropriate the largest possible share of prairie wealth for central and eastern interests (Hiller, 2000; Fowke, 1957; Conway, 1984), families were also under economic assault.

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[45] Fontaine and Schlumbohm (2000) argue that the initial impetus for the study of family strategies came from Bourdieu's 1972 report on the use of marriage as a means of improving a family's position in society. He dealt with the father/patriarch as the strategizer, using his children as tokens in a game with the goal of obtaining marriage unions that improved the father's financial or social position. Subsequent researchers have tended to focus on strategies that benefited the family as a whole and allowed for a greater role for internal discussion and negotiation in choosing the strategy to be followed. See also Bourdieu (1976).

[46] See also Redclift (1986) who discusses strategies in terms of the reallocation of time, the renegotiation of gender roles and shifts in occupational role playing, with most of the changes being made by women.

To cope with economic losses, farm families would initially have had only their simple implements and tools, skills and labour power as defenses against exploitation (or market inequity). However, despite the power and asset imbalance, families were not helpless in the face of business interests. A variety of options could be pursued to generate the additional funds needed to compensate for previous losses. For example, channeling family labour into producing cash crops would increase the chances of succeeding but such efforts could be frustrated by the same market manipulation. Thus, acting outside of the scope of the market could prove more fruitful. In other words, adopting the approach reviewed by Deere (1976) and Cohen (1988) could increase the chances of survival through the period of hardship. Adjusting the family's labour resources[47] to increase the effort put into subsistence production could provide the necessary defense to capital's exploitative efforts (Humphries, 1982). Other strategies including increasing the effort for both productive and subsistence production, job searches, private production of marketable items or adjusting behaviour to reduce the demand for subsistence goods or services (Fontaine and Schlumbohm, 2000; Cohen, 1988; Deere, 1976) could also prove valuable.

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[47] Most researchers, possibly because feminist writers have focused on this field, directed their attention at women as the source of adaptable labour in families. The role of women in preserving family finances in the depressed economies of the Maritime Region was dealt with by Connelly and MacDonald (1983), Ghorayshi (1989, p. 571) argued that women's work was "essential for the survival of the farm family enterprise" (in Quebec), and Reimer (1986) saw domestic labour as integral to farming. Similar theories have been expressed by Kohl (1977), Sachs (1983) and Neth

Dealing specifically with the labour of children, Fontain and Schlumbohm (2000) indicated that their historical study of family survival under harsh economic conditions revealed that the work performed by children was a necessary aspect of "household strategies for survival" (Fontain and Schlumbohm, 2000, p. 1). Their research provided one of the clearest links between family labour and survival by reviewing several hundred years of European economic history and closely analyzing the periods of economic downturn that were found. They discovered that during those periods, the income of many of the poorest households was insufficient to support even a bare subsistence diet for its members and that as a result (welfare systems were non-existent or unable to help many of the 'labouring poor'[48]) deaths should have been quite high. However, most of these families did manage to survive and the research indicated that this was a result of the adaptability of all family members in the workplace. Except for the smallest children, each person had to provide support for themselves and the family by working at whatever type of job they could find during the course of the year or season. Work might be done for wages, to produce items for sale or to produce subsistence food for the family but all contributed and the household survived.

(1995, p. 18) who went on to indicate that the labour of all family members, including children, was "crucial for the economic survival and prosperity of small family-owned farms".

[48] Fontain and Schlumbohm (2000, p. 1) defined the 'labouring poor' as those individuals who supported themselves one day at a time. Quite literally, these workers depended upon the current

Under such circumstances, no family member able to work could be idle. Thus, small children capable of performing simple tasks requiring little muscular power could provide cheap labour (Light, Hertsgaard and Martin, 1985) and they would gain knowledge, physical strength and skills as they aged (Neth, 1995) and become more valuable to the family. In the farming scenario, researchers also found that even those children who could not contribute directly to producing cash crops were able to increase the family's level of production by handling domestic and subsistence requirements so that adults had additional time to apply to productive activity (Kohl, 1976; Stansell, 1976). Thus, children's labour could benefit any family strategy.

While the term 'strategy' implies planning and 'family' suggests input from all members of the family unit, a dominant member, particularly the father/patriarch, could set the pattern to be followed (Pile, 1991). Discussion and negotiations might occur but within family power circles, few members had any authority or power other than the patriarch.[49] Pile (1991), for example, argued that his study of current day farming practices in Britain, suggested that the scripting of the family patriarch lay behind most 'family' decisions. The control may no longer be as strong as in the past when women's options were more curtailed but men continue to dominate. Thus, the ultimate outcome of a family strategy could well

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day's wage for the current day's food and had to work again every day on which food and shelter were desired.

[49] Ward (1990) also critiqued those who suggested that all members of the family negotiated the single strategy to be followed. He argued that households were not cohesive units but rather,

have been to continue acting in the same way as before the problem arose, as continuity has the benefit of comfort and habit (Fontaine and Schlumbohm, 2000). As such, men would assign work involved in producing cash crops or animal products to themselves while women handled unpaid backup duties such as keeping the books and performing subsistence labour.

In their 1989 study of farm children, Wallace, Dunkerley, Cheal and Warren (1994) also concluded that the influence of patriarchy continued to be found in decisions but also appeared to argue that this domination may have been an integral aspect of the family survival process. The household had to act as "an interactive economic and social unit rather than a collection of independent individual actors" and in ensuring survival of the family and viability of the farm, both "long term and short term strategies for economic survival and expansion" (maintaining current cash flow while saving and investing for the future) had to be considered. The gendered and generational division of labour associated with patriarchy provided a general guiding principle of organization for efficiency (Wallace, Dunkerley, Cheal and Warren, 1994, p. 505).[50] As such, the number, age and gender of children in the family unit could itself become a survival trait and part of a family economic strategy. A settler could not plan for an emergency to occur at a particular point in time and adjust reproduction to ensure an appropriate

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spheres within which an inequality of power and responsibility exist. As such, a family strategy could prove to be a single member's plan.

[50] This was not to say that intense negotiation and compromise did not occur within the family circle concerning the appropriateness of the historically derived division of labour in particular

mix of ages, genders and skill sets among the family members to meet particular challenges. However, the larger the family, the larger the pool of time, effort and ability that could be brought to bear on a problem and the more likely a solution would be found (Tilly and Scott, 1987).[51]

2) *Valuing the Contribution of Children*

Given that the labour of children on the prairies would generally have been performed at the family's behest, on the family's farm, and that the products of the labour would be sold under the family account (if a saleable product was created), it has been and remains virtually impossible to measure the economic value of child labour with any degree of certainty. As will be discussed in greater detail below, researchers have calculated estimates of the value of children's labour, and cash equivalence comparisons have been used for the same purpose but in all cases, uncertainty remains. What may be said with confidence is that children's labour

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situations, but rather it was an acknowledgement of the continuing influence of patriarchy as an organizational tool within families.

[51] Neth (1995, p. 18) indicated that:

> the labour of all family members was crucial for the economic survival and prosperity of small, family-owned farms. Because the vagaries of weather and market made farm income highly variable, farm families compensated by designing labour-intensive strategies that met many of the needs of the farm and family, and saved cash. Family members' return for their labour came not through an individual wage, but through a share of the living the farm provided and an assurance that the farm would be a resource for the family's future (Emphasis added).

She went on, however, to note that the man of the farm held all of the power and owned and controlled all assets produced with the group's labour, thus making family structures at the beginning of the 20th century in the American mid-western settlement region hierarchical and subject to unequal work and rewards.

was valued, appreciated, needed and necessary to establish and maintain farm viability even if a dollar value could not be attributed to it.

Suggesting that a valuation could be made through an analysis of statistical and anecdotal evidence cannot work as, at best, even with perfect information on hours of work and the duties performed, few activities would generate distinguishable products attributable to a particular child. There would be no way to trace a particular bag of wheat or a dozen eggs to any single member of the farm family as its creator because in a sense, all farm labour would contribute to all farm production. One possible exception might be a child given ownership of an animal but even then, the animal might have received care or inputs from other family members working on outdoor projects, eaten hay or oats grown from 'family' seed, manure and water drawing on the natural fecundity of family soil for its nutritional value. None of these inputs were likely to have been the property of a child.

Alternatively, it could be argued that a percentage, based on the hours spent working by a child as compared to the total number of hours spent on a product by all contributors would provide a fair estimate of the child's value in relation to that project. The problem of reliance on 'family' inputs without cost attribution would remain but even if this issue could be resolved, the quality of the child's work would still have to be accounted for as inputs from several individuals on the farm would likely have been involved with the production of any item. The quality of each person's work could affect their contribution to the product and the only way to be certain that any particular child's input was being properly valued would be to analyze an actual area over which the child had absolute control, an unlikely prospect on a working farm. Even if this could be accomplished in some fashion, the major difficulty in evaluating children's labour would remain, the fact that some activities would not result in a product for sale. Without the sale transaction, no financial value could be attributed to the labour.

Despite the low likelihood of producing an accurate assessment of the financial value of a farm child, researchers have not failed to examine the situation. For example, Craig (1993) advanced a theory based on the economic value of children to explain declines in American fertility rates prior to the civil war in the 1860s.[52] However, in making his assessment, Craig relied upon anecdotal sources to estimate the time spent on work by adults and children on the American frontier. As such, his work is open to debate as obtaining perfect detail on work done decades earlier from a mixture of letters, diaries and other biographical material would have been impossible, and raises concerns about the accuracy of his estimates relating to the work time of adults and children. He did use Census data on the cost of inputs and the value of outputs to perform his calculations, but the degree of reliability of his estimates is questionable.

Craig (1993) found that children in all regions did the same kinds of work as their parents and did not 'specialize' to any degree in the tasks they handled. In other words, "children probably did whatever they could to help out whenever it needed to be done, and the same may be said of adults as well" (Craig, 1993, p. 66). While such a generalized conclusion may have been accurate, his work time estimates led him to conclude that on the American frontier, children under the age of seven contributed nothing to output, those aged seven to twelve and teenaged girls produced modest values, teenaged males had double their output and adult women were valued at three times as much as their sons. Adult men contributed the most, working approximately 25 per cent more than their wives, but it must be remembered that Craig was not valuing domestic labour or efforts in cost reduction in his study, even though they could be translated readily into monetary value for the farming operation.

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[52] Craig (1993) argued that as the land filled with settlers, the value of children to the farmer declined. The additional output obtainable from having the extra labour available was not worth the

Secondly, attempting to value children's labour by comparing the child's activities against those of another individual whose value was known, would also be of little assistance. This process of comparative valuation would be similar to that utilized in attempting to assess the value of unpaid women's work in the home. For example, Eichler (1985) attempted to utilize the comparative approach to calculate the value of women's work. As such, the wages of a cook or the cost of purchased meals, childcare workers, nurses, maids and other workers necessary to fully replace the services provided by wives would have to be accounted for, presumably based on the cost for a measured period of time.

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cost of having to establish each child with their own land so as to ensure that they would in turn be capable of providing security for the parent's old age.

If the attempt at valuation were to be made, the comparable subject or subjects would have to perform all of the same tasks handled by the child. However, even if a hired hand, or a hired hand and a domestic servant who, combined, performed all of the child's tasks could be located, quality differences in execution of the tasks due to variations in skill levels would impact the wage estimate, once again adding to the inaccuracy of the effort. For these reasons, Craig (1993) argued that for a comparable valuation of a settler's child's work in the pre-civil war United States, the subject would have to be a child with a known economic value who could be required to handle all of the same tasks as a settler child. His solution to this dilemma was to suggest that the purchase price of a slave of similar age and gender could be used but he did not proceed with the valuation given problems with the comparability of the subjects. The settler child could not be sold and that would affect the value of their labour as capital costs could not be recovered on a later sale. Further, working conditions on slave farms and frontier farms were quite different and the amount of work obtainable from each child, and thus their potential values, would differ.

Given the negative analysis of possible methods of determining the financial value of settler children set out above, this study will do nothing to lessen the uncertainty that surrounds attempts to discern such values as it is contended that such research focuses on the wrong question. The financial value of children's labour can never be known. However, it can be determined, with a high degree of certainty, that children were needed by families in non-mechanized frontier farming societies for their labour, despite the inability to verify exactly what such labour contributed in a monetary sense.

For example, one of the clearest illustrations of the willingness of Canadian farmers to utilize the work of children was provided by the program established by Thomas J. Barnardo in 1868 to move British boys and girls to Canada. Such children were generally from orphanages, detention houses, or picked up off the streets of London and taken into the Barnardo Home for training in the skills necessary to obtain farm or domestic work in Canada, depending on the sex of the child involved. Once trained, an effort would be made to 'place' these children in suitable work surroundings and as part of this program, Barnardo's agents in Canada advertised the availability of these young labourers. For example, the April, 1890 edition of The Farmer's Advocate (p. 127) ran an advertisement proclaiming that they had "Boys for Farm Help!" for whom they were seeking "good situations with farmers". It was indicated that 3,000 children were available and promised that those sent to Canada would be selected for "their moral and physical suitability for Canadian farm life." Farmers who required labour were invited to reply and Barnardo's agent stated that they:

> had more applications for them than we could supply, and every day during the spring and summer letters poured in upon us from farmers all over the country, applying for boys of all ages and descriptions. It is needless to say we have been obliged to disappoint a very great number, while others we had to keep waiting many weeks for our second

> and third parties, until we could send them boys (Owen, 1890, p. 79)[53]

In their new situations, these children were expected to provide whatever labour was demanded and as described by Bagnell (1980, p. 244) many of them "could be worked, not merely hard – as were others of their time – but to a degree that would justify their feelings in the late years of their lives that they had been, in fact, slaves". Low pay, poor food and clothing, sexual abuse and dangerous working conditions were not unusual. In fact, some employers continually exchanged children so that they would not have to pay higher wage rates for the children as they aged (Parr, 1980).[54] In this way, maximum profitability could be attained from the farm through the use of low paid child labour.

Not all children placed with Canadian families under the program faced brutality or neglect but the natural hazards associated with starting a farm on the prairies were harsh enough given that one of the purposes of the Barnardo program was to remove children from England where they could expect little but a hard life in the factories. Parr noted that "frostbite and gangrene are as much industrial hazards as lint and smoke-filled lungs. Limbs were lost to binders as well as to drill presses" (Parr, 1980, p. 12) and with such natural disasters at hand, additional cruelty was inhumane particularly as work on the farms was to build up their strength, purify their minds and give them an appreciation for honest work.

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[53] A total of 80,000 British boys and girls were sent to Canada through the Barnardo program between 1868 and 1925 (Parr, 1980). These children were trained to handle either farm labour or domestic chores and then 'distributed' to farms and homes in accordance with demand for their services. Parr notes that there were a total of 20 'distributing' homes in Canada but as only two were located on the prairies, it is likely that the majority of these children worked on farms (boys) and as domestic servants (girls) in Ontario and Quebec where the majority of the Canadian population was located. Even so, thousands would have been sent west to fill the demand for cheap labour in the expanding agricultural communities.

[54] It should be noted that under the agreement between the Barnardo Home and the farmer taking possession of a child, the farmer had to supply "sufficient and proper board, lodging, clothing, and necessaries," but with respect to wages, money would be paid to the Home rather than to the child (Wymer, 1954).

In short, the Barnardo children were removed from England, many without parental consent, and became cheap labourers in Canada.[55] Given the ease with which these children were placed, it seems clear that even if the value of the work performed by children could not be accurately measured, it was seen as a benefit by those who managed to obtain a child. While it is unlikely that parents would work their own children to the point that they felt like slaves (Bagnell, 1980), the Barnardo situation does suggest that children's labour could indeed be of economic value and thus contribute to the success of the family farm. Further support for this proposition is provided by Webb (1989, p. 127) whose studies of American homesteaders led her to conclude that widows with children found it easier to re-marry than those without as "men would want the economic advantage their children would bring".

This appreciation for the labour of children was especially acute where agricultural practices were "highly labour intensive" (Levy, 1985, p. 778). In such circumstances, studies have shown that family sizes tended to increase to meet labour requirements. For example, Levy's research into farming practices in Egypt in the 1980s indicated that the lack of mechanization had created a high demand for labour. This demand in turn increased the cost of hiring outside help but due to the nature of the cotton plant (it was more efficient for children to work with the plants given their small size), the large size of the parcels of land devoted to growing the plant, and the relative inexpensiveness of child workers, it was children who were most in demand as workers. They were thus so valuable to their families that "the high return to the raw labour power of children discourage[d] investment in skills obtained in schools" (Levy, 1985, p. 789).

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[55] The Barnardo children who were too young to provide a full day's labour (under the age of 9) were also delivered to private homes. The families that accepted such foster children signed an agreement committing them to treating the child well and seeing to its proper physical, emotional, religious and educational upbringing and in return, were paid 5 shillings per week for each child

It is noteworthy that huge amounts of land were available for the taking on the prairies, a non-mechanized farming region during the settlement period. Homestead rules meant that land could be obtained for the cost of supplies and the labour to develop and farm it and having a large family to share in the work could make the process easier for all. As such, the value attributed to children on the farm made it likely that large families would become the norm in the region. Sharif (1993) confirmed this effect in societies dependant on land for the family livelihood. Farmers with large holdings were more likely to have large families[56] but others who studied the situation in the mid-western and western territories of the United States found a somewhat different pattern.

(Wymer, 1954). This stipend, in addition to any work that the child could do, provided a constant source of funds for settlers in an otherwise uncertain situation.

[56] Children may also have been needed as substitutes for land in the third world countries studied by Sharif (1993) when families had too little land to survive. Under such landless circumstances,

Both Easterlin (1976) and Gjerde and McCants (1995) agreed that the basic thesis, that families would expand until all available land was filled, was only partially correct in the American experience. Gjerde and McCants (1995) argued that the initial surge in family size was a result of escaping from the limits imposed on a couple in their home countries where marriage and children were delayed until a livelihood was obtained. The easy availability of land under the American homestead system thus reduced the delay in marriage associated with the homeland and created a rush to parenthood that was only controlled when conditions began to be normalized and the old traditions were restored in ethnic enclaves. Easterlin's (1976, p. 66) position was much the same except that in his view, the decline in fertility came as a result of the realization that land was becoming more rare over time and that as such, a family would be unable to "provide for" more children and would "feel pressure to prevent further additions" to the nursery. In other words, Easterlin appeared to adopt a position of foresight by a particular generation concerned with the prospects for the next, while Gjerde and McCants (1995) felt that at some point, a lack of available land in a current generation would limit marriage and birth rates.

With free homestead lands, the Canadian prairies would be attractive to settlers and high marriage and birth rates could thus be expected in Canada as well. In conditions such as these, male children could become doubly valuable to

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children would then be required to support the family in the short run by contributing income and over the long term by providing security for the parent's old age.

Canadian parents as they, unlike their sisters, could claim homesteads of their own when they came of age. This could increase the asset base and fortunes of the extended family as a whole (Easterlin, 1976), or the new adults could strike out on their own, having their own children and becoming part of a more distant kinship link with obligations back to the founding family (Finch, 1989).

Given the nature of the topic under study, the economic contribution of children to the settlement process, the discussion of the value of children has, of necessity, revolved around land, work and the financial worth of the heirs of the prairie pioneers. It is important to note that children did have values[57] other than the purely economic to settler families. These values are just as difficult to measure, assess and document as financial contributions, but at the same time, may be 'instinctively' recognized as existing and being necessary to the well-being of most individuals or spouses under current social belief patterns. This is not to say that every member of every pioneer family would have found the same value or benefit in children but as noted earlier, attitudes toward children in British origin families were in the process of changing during the Victorian and Edwardian periods toward the appreciation of children for their more ephemeral qualities.

Espenshade (1977, pp. 4-5) discusses these values or benefits as being on both the emotional (or psychic) level, and the economic. Thus, on the emotional side, children could, simply through their presence, provide a sense of adulthood and maturity for the husband and wife along with a link to immortality as a child could outlive its parents and pass their heritage on to another generation. Children also gave parents the opportunity to achieve a high moral standing by acting for the good of the child, a group linkage for support, novelty and an escape from boredom, a sense of accomplishment, the power to influence the lives of others and prestige within the community. At the same time, as discussed, they also contributed to the financial well being of the family. Helping with domestic duties so that parents could work, taking on paid employment, assisting in a family business, or providing economic support when parents retired were all possible positive factors mentioned by Espanshade (1977).

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[57] Espenshade's (1977, p. 4) review of the 'value' of children suggests a number of descriptors that may be more appropriate when discussing both the financial and non-financial worth of children in

However children's contributions are considered or referred to, the true measure of the importance of children and their labour has been hidden within the household and can never be known with certainty. Nonetheless, it cannot be denied that labour has been performed by children and when it was, it made a necessary contribution to family survival strategies (Pile, 1991; Wallace, Dunkerley, Cheal and Warren, 1994; Fontain and Schlumbohm, 2000).

3) The Lack of Economic Accountability for Children's Labour

If having a family and dividing the necessary farm labour among them was a necessary action for many settlers, it might be assumed that history would record

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a family. Thus, children may provide "satisfactions, benefits, utilities, rewards, gains, gratifications, advantages and positive general values" for their parents and companionship for other children.

this fact and that all family members would be duly credited for their efforts. However, this did not occur. Until the 1970s the farming sector was effectively seen as a male preserve under a historically generated patriarchal system of economic, social and political domination (Tilly and Scott, 1980; Cohen, 1988; Ursel, 1992). As discussed earlier, men tended to hold the reins of power within the family and owned the land, equipment, animals and crops, held the bank accounts, paid the bills and covered taxes. Given this, families were incidental to history as males dominated the productive fields that drew the attention of the record keepers and were thus shown in the historical records as, in effect, the sole producer of all wealth on the family farm.

In so far as independent productive (marketable) activity on the part of women or other family members was concerned, families have 'always' been seen, measured and reported as an "undifferentiated" economic unit (Cohen, 1988, p. 6). As such, the efforts of individual family members have been merged into a family labour pool and all economic activity has been treated as 'family' output without attribution to any particular individual (Cohen, 1988, p. 6). Other categories of labour have fared even worse. Non-productive work performed by women or other family members, such as performing domestic chores or providing subsistence for the family, created no marketable good or service and remained unpaid (and thus unimportant). The value of such labour was thus even more obscured from view as no indication of its existence would have appeared beyond the farm. Subsistence labour and domestic activities were necessary to the success of the farm but as non-market activities, they were not measured and thus were never recorded, even within the 'family' figures. However, this treatment may be somewhat surprising given Kohl's (1977, p. 47) assertion that:

> the fusion of work and family in these enterprises [family farming operations] sets the role of the housewife firmly within the productive sphere in marked contrast to the similar activities of the housewife in the usual urban setting. The proximity between work and residence and their interrelationship of necessity involve women in the work-world of men.

Given that women were sometimes involved in 'men's work' and contributed to productive output,[58] some aspect of their labour would have been recorded but for the domination of the family patriarch and their treatment as part of an 'undifferentiated unit' for accounting purposes. Relieving the settler of domestic duties, raising children as farm workers, and providing subsistence for the family may have freed the husband to devote his labour to marketable activities[59] and thus increased output but in so far as the economic record was concerned, the settler's wife was a non-entity who contributed nothing to the farm or society (Sachs, 1983; Cohen, 1988; Fox, 1991).

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[58] While women were expected to adapt and take part in the 'male sphere' of farming activity whenever required, the opposite seldom held true (Bennett, Kohl and Binion, 1982; Cohen, 1988; Kohl, 1977; Sachs, 1983).

[59] Keating and Munro (1988, p. 158) reached the same conclusion but added the fact that women may in turn "be freed from farm labour when children can take over some farm work". (See Katz, 1995 who makes a similar argument). Presumably, children could also take over work activities performed by their fathers to provide them with more time for productive pursuits.

As such, despite their numbers and the contribution made to family and farm survival and viability, women were the "Invisible Farmers" of Sachs (1983, pp. 4-5) whose "subsistence labor was economically essential for the survival of the farm" but whose "work was undervalued because it was generally non-market activity". They were also the "invisible characters" of Wilson (1982, p. 52) who were secondary in authority to men but part of "an economic unit towards which all members made essential contributions", such invisibility being the result of the "masculine preoccupations and social structure which dominated the West" (Stansell, 1976, pp. 88-89).[60] In effect, as stated by Whatmore (1991, p. 3) "women are invisible workers in family enterprises precisely because of the overriding ideology that they are really housewives who, as Moore has put it, 'happen to be using their leisure time in a profitable way' (1988, p. 84)."

This situation began to change for women as researchers and theorists such as those mentioned above began to pierce the patriarchal veil and economic reporting practices that obscured the economic history of women. Bringing achievements in production and family survival strategies to light was of assistance but additional revelations came from those such as Strong-Boag (1986) who was among the earliest to document the unseen burden carried by women through work in the home and on the productive side of farming operations. Secombe (1973,

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[60] While Stansell (1976) researched conditions on the American plains, her comments respecting the conditions faced are virtually identical to descriptions of life on the Canadian side of the political boundary that divides the prairies. She argued that "[without] female labour, cash-crop agriculture could never have developed" as assistance was hard to obtain and the (male) farmer thus "could count only on his wife and children as extra hands" (p. 93).

1980) also contributed to the effort to make women's labour visible by attempting to revise Marxist theory and develop new arguments that would recognize work in the home as 'productive' despite its unpaid status. Using an argument similar to that proposed by Deere (1976), Secombe contended that a wife's labour, even if giving the appearance of creating no marketable commodity that would generate a payment to the wife, was productive as it created a saleable commodity, the labour of the husband, for which he 'paid' the wife a share of his wage. The wife's wage was never exploited directly by capital but being part of the capitalist economy (Secombe did not believe that a wife's labour existed outside of the market as had been argued by Deere), it was exploited indirectly through the husband as part of the "congealed mass" of the husband's available surplus labour (Secombe, 1973, p.9).[61] Each new argument revealed more of the truth about women and explained how such significant contributions to the family could be overlooked.

Conversely, less attention has been paid to the importance of children's work in this process and where children have been discussed, their efforts seem to be treated as incidental to the point being made. As such, consideration of children's work is currently at the same stage as women's work prior to the 1970s, it is mentioned but not elaborated upon in any detail. However, it is the author's contention that the theoretical approaches utilized in understanding the importance of women's economic contributions to the family and in making their efforts 'visible' can be extended to the work of settler children since almost identical social and economic forces are involved.

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[61] Fox (1980), discounted this approach and argued that household labour could only be considered non-productive under Marxist theory as the labour of women is not purchased in an open market and is thus not subjected to the pressure that would determine its true exchange value in the market. This being the case, women's labour could not by definition generate surplus labour to be exploited.

For example, children were the dependent offspring of the adult members of a family unit while women were seen as dependent on their husbands and thus could be argued to be "silent partners" in the enterprise (Walter and Wilson, 1996, p. 227). As mentioned earlier, children had a very limited legal status to own property or control their lives outside of the family while women seldom owned property or acted on their own behalf (Ursel, 1992).[62] Further, as with women, the male head of the household received credit for children's actions and appropriated some or all of any money they earned or products they created for the benefit of the family or the farm as necessary (Cohen, 1988; Neth, 1995). With women, this was explained as an example of providing voluntary assistance to their husband's projects or working out of a sense of love, duty or family obligation rather than for personal financial gain or credit (Bennett, Kohl and Binion, 1982). Under this system, the woman would share in the 'family' income, albeit under the patriarch's control, and thus receive some 'benefit' from her labour (Whatmore, 1991; Cohen,

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However, women's labour could reduce the burden on men and allow them to be more productive, thereby increasing the amount produced.

[62] In Canada, the dependence of women on men was supported by the fact that women could not obtain homesteads under the Dominion Lands Act, 1872 unless they were widowed or divorced with dependent children. (Also see Rollings-Magnusson (1999) for particulars of the actions taken by federal and provincial governments in support of the patriarchal family system). However, in the United States, women were entitled to claim homesteads on the same basis as men. As such, "women gained economic independence and personal dignity and they directly contributed to the material development of the west" (Webb, 1989, p. 115).

1988). For children, reference need not even be made to sharing in the family income as shown by the comments recorded by Wallace, Dunkerley, Cheal and Warren (1994, p. 514) in their survey of farm children where an interviewee, in response to a question asking if they were paid for working on the farm, indicated: "No! Well, you've got to eat! We don't work like that." In other words, farm children did not see themselves as working for a share of the farm income, rather they saw themselves as contributing to their own sustenance because, in fact, family sustenance and their own were inseparable.

4) Summary

Based on the foregoing discussion of children's activities and working habits, it seems quite clear that children were of value or a benefit to their parents. If the theories are correct, they were of the greatest economic value to those who operated farms under non-mechanized conditions where labour power was a necessity, as was the case on the prairie frontier. Under such conditions, children would honor their obligations to the family and work toward survival and prosperity, applying the skills and determination learned through the socialization process to the family's problems under the direction of the father. However, as had happened with women, children's labour, while desired, was never accounted for as it was unpaid, made within the boundaries of the larger family economic unit and credited to the head of that unit for record keeping purposes. Further, children's labour within the family would be even less 'visible' than that of their mothers as their actions could be explained as aspects of family life rather than 'work' in the sense of being labour intended or required to produce a product of economic benefit.

For example, suggesting that children's activities were aspects of socialization, designed to prepare the child for the future by assigning chores or tasks (not work) to enhance skills might not be called work by some and a similar argument could be made respecting the performance of minor tasks out of a sense of love or moral obligation (Symes and Appleton, 1986; Wallace, Dunkerley, Cheal and Warren, 1994). However, it is suggested that such euphemisms simply disguise the work nature of many activities and thereby maintain the illusion that only the head of the family provides productive labour. Thus, with respect to contributing labour to the family farm, the status and lived experience of mothers and their children were quite similar and as such, it is argued that theories of economic 'invisibility' based on dependency under a patriarchal system, a lack of control over one's labour and an associated limited economic status (Cohen, 1988; Neth, 1995) can be extended to explain why pioneer children received no recognition for the work done in ensuring the viability of the family farm in the developing prairie agricultural economy.

CHAPTER THREE

METHOD

While a great deal is known about the role of men on the prairie frontier and more is being discovered about the contributions made by women each year, little has been reported about the work efforts of the children of these pioneers. Brief references to children as appendages of the parents (children 'helped'), or to their secondary status (such as referring to a woman 'and her children' performing a task) have left the impression that children may have performed a few simple tasks on pioneer farms, but had no important role to play.[63] This impression has been supported indirectly by 'official' documentation from the settlement period. No government reports exist that account for the work performed by children (or women), and neither grain company or railway documents record the involvement of children (or women) in the production of wheat or the shipping of produce. Only the farmer (generally the father and husband) who held title to the land, owned the grain or dealt with shipments merited mention in the registers.

However, even if children's efforts were co-mingled with those of their parents and were not discernable from an external view, the labour they contributed to family farming operations, or at least the fact that they did work on the farm, could be confirmed through private documents prepared by the children themselves. Thus, this Chapter sets out the method used to study the labour performed by farm children in the process of creating and operating family farms during the settlement of the Canadian prairies.

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[63] As noted in the first two chapters, studies have been made of the work actually performed by children but these have largely been limited to work in 'modern' or mechanized farm operations,

The Chapter begins by outlining the parameters and conceptual definitions applied to focus the research. These parameters include the historical time frame within which children's work on the prairies was examined (see section one) and the physical and political boundaries of the western prairie region within which the study subjects lived (see section two). Regional boundaries were also subdivided into four zones of potential agricultural productivity based on the geography, climate and elevation of the zones together with soil fertility and moisture levels. The third section deals with the identification of those individuals to be considered as 'children', while the fourth delineates the study population.

The fifth section of this Chapter discusses the method used in this study; socio-historical research. Documents such as unpublished diaries, poems, autobiographies, letters and memoirs, as well as selected relevant published material, and government records were all reviewed as a means of identifying and classifying the nature of children's work during the study period. These materials were also used to obtain, wherever possible, qualitative information on the lives of the individual children who laboured on farms based on the reflections and stories contained within the papers they had written. This approach recognizes the voice

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dealt with experiences outside of Canada or the prairie region, or have discussed child labour in generalities, as 'chores' or in terms of 'subsistence' or 'survival' rather than specific tasks.

of children and provides a glimpse into their lives and as such, offers not only a snapshot of the work that they did but also the context in which it was performed. The strengths and weaknesses of these original source materials are also discussed.

Section six details the process used in establishing a typology of children's labour based on the nature of the contributions that various work tasks made to family farming operations. The various categories of labour are identified and their use in further data analysis is discussed. Section seven completes the Chapter with a summary of the parameters within which this study was conducted and the method that was utilized.

1) The Time Parameter

In pursuing this study, the 1871 to 1913 time frame was chosen for four reasons. Firstly, the prairie region was acquired and made part of the Dominion of Canada in 1870 and programs to encourage settlement were established almost immediately. For example, the first Order-in-Council authorizing the grant of free homestead lands to settlers was proclaimed by the federal government in 1871 and represented the beginning of a massive immigration program to fill the prairies (Martin, 1938). By 1881, the effects of that program were becoming noticeable in terms of increasing population figures (Table A, Appendix 1). Secondly, federal statisticians began to accumulate information on the prairie region with the Census of 1871 and continued every ten years thereafter, thus providing comparative records for use in this study.[64] For example, the 1871 Census revealed that there were 73,228 Europeans on the prairies and that this number grew to 1,334,600 by the 1911 Census (Urquhart and Buckley, 1965, Series A2-14). Thus, the population expanded approximately seventeen times in forty years, suggesting that the region was a dynamic area of rapid change that would provide a wide range of subjects for study.[65] The third reason for choosing this time frame was that 1913 was the last year of 'normal' immigration activity prior to the outbreak of World War I. This event disrupted routine actions and distorted immigration patterns, as shown by the fact that immigration to Canada plunged from the 400,870 individuals recorded in 1913 to 150,484 in 1914, and did not return to even the 1914 level until 1927 (Urquhart and Buckley, 1965, Series A254). This not only reduced the flow of potential subjects for the study but guaranteed that the 'mix' of subjects would be altered in that the proportion of 'new' farming children would be reduced and that of 'experienced' and older children who might have performed different jobs (if potential age effects on labour did exist) would grow as a percentage of the child working population.

The fourth and final reason was that the settlement era was a unique period in Canadian history as immigrants and migrants flooded into the newly opened region to claim the opportunity presented by the availability of effectively free land. Land was a commodity in short supply in the comparatively over-populated countries of Europe but in addition, most of the 'preferred' land in central and eastern Canada had been claimed, and the supply of arable land available in the United States declined after the 1850s as their own homesteading policy drew settlers across the continent (Morton, 1938). Setbacks occurred, many failed in the effort, and the entire process was extremely labour-intensive, but many settlers managed to survive despite the obstacles they faced and despite their lack of assets, knowledge, equipment and assistance. By 1913, mechanized equipment was becoming more available along with automobiles and other labour and time saving devices, meaning that to extend the study farther into the war years would increase that chances of leaving the 'pioneer' period behind and finding non-traditional practices in operation.

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[64] Information has also been obtained from a special Census of the 'Northwest Provinces' conducted in 1906 and a similar Census of the 'Prairie Provinces' from 1916. In some cases, utilizing information from both the 1911 and 1916 Census reports proved useful given that the study period extended to 1913, a year in which no major Census was conducted.

[65] Given the rapid population change, a reasonable number of children would have been entering the prairies and working on the family farms. This would increase the number of children with the

2) Territorial Parameter

With respect to designating the area of the country within which the study population resided, the prairie region could be defined by either the natural or political boundaries applicable to the area. In the latter case, time would also become a factor as the political divisions of and within the region changed considerably during the forty-year time frame involved in this study.

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potential to record their experiences and thus the probability that one or more such records would ultimately survive and become available for study.

As the intent of this study is to examine the work of children on settler farms (whether these farms were established as homesteads, on purchased lands, through rental agreements, or otherwise), the 'original' natural and political boundaries of the Territories defined an area far too large for practical use in the study. The Territories (having been created out of the western lands owned by the Hudson's Bay Company and the northern areas claimed by the British government that were sold to the new federal government in 1870), included large expanses of non-arable land that could support few settlers (Martin, 1938). In effect, the Territories encompassed all land north of the American border, west of Hudson's Bay and east of the Rocky Mountains. However, the only portion of the Territories reasonably fit for settlement and farming by new settlers in the late 1800s lay in the southern half of the region (Dawson and Younge, 1940). This area makes up the central and southern portions of the provinces currently referred to as Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta and will be designated as the 'prairies' throughout this paper.

The scenario was more complex historically given the number of political changes that occurred over time. When the Dominion of Canada obtained the lands, the region was immediately divided by creating a small version of the province of Manitoba and dividing the balance of the region into administrative districts that progressed through a series of boundary and name changes over the next several decades. The Keewatin district was formed and designated to administer the Precambrian Shield lands surrounding the Bay itself in 1876 and the remaining territory was broken into five portions, Assiniboia, Saskatchewan, Alberta, Athabaska and the North-West Territories in 1880. Further variations of the borders of these districts in the 1880s and 1890s, an alteration of the name from the North-West Territories to the 'Mackenzie District' in 1895 and the formation of Saskatchewan and Alberta as provinces in 1905, were also major changes (Martin, 1938, p. 224).

Overall, Dawson and Younge (1940) suggest that in the prairie region, approximately one-half of the land (51,800,000 of the 104,500,000 acres available in the region) is suitable for cultivation and a further 27,150,000 acres is marginal for crop based agriculture. The majority of cultivatable land lies in the zones with dark brown and black park soils (the Fertile Crescent[66] and the Regina Plain[67]) and much of the marginal land lay in the light brown soils of Palliser's Triangle.[68] However, the rich dark meadow soil of the Red River Valley[69] makes it the most productive farming zone despite potential problems with flooding. As the nature of the labour required to establish and maintain a viable farming operation could differ in each of the noted zones due to the physical and climate differences that exist, this possibility was allowed for and source materials were reviewed accordingly in the study.

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[66] The Fertile Crescent, is marked by the Manitoba Escarpment, a plateau that runs from southeast to northwest, from the American border through Brandon, Manitoba to the Precambrian Shield area in the north. Elevation is an average of 1,600 feet above sea level and the area contains deeply trenched rivers that cut through the various prairie soils and the richer black park soils in the area over time. The more eastern and northern portions of the Escarpment (lying approximately between Brandon and the Qu'Appelle Valley of Saskatchewan in the south and arcing to the north-west slightly above Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, then running west to Edmonton, Alberta and southwest to the level of Red Deer, Alberta) contain fertile "black park soils", receive extra rainfall and are marked by a belt of heavy brush and tree growth (Dawson and Younge, 1940). Those portions located further to the north have less of an advantage due to the reduced length of the safe growing season. The northern border of this zone is the Precambrian Shield.

[67] The Regina Plain lies in the remaining portion of the Escarpment to the west and south of the Fertile Crescent and contains portions of the next higher elevation beginning at the 'Missouri Coteau' (a ridge of dirt hills 300 to 500 feet higher than the Manitoba Escarpment). This zone is a relatively narrow band of dark brown prairie soil that receives somewhat less moisture than the Crescent but is ideal grain growing territory. It extends in an arc parallel to, but south of, the Crescent but while the Crescent sweeps down from Edmonton and ends at the level of Red Deer Alberta, the Regina Plain runs parallel to the mountains and continues to the American border beneath Calgary, Alberta.

3) Defining the Concept of 'Child(ren)'

Initially, setting the parameters that identified children for the purposes of this study seemed a simple task best resolved by using a practical lower age limit such as the age at which a child became competent to walk and could be relied upon to follow simple task instructions. The upper age limit could have been set at the legal age of majority and in that way, an easily used and monitored standard that could be applied consistently to all of the documentary material assembled for study would have been available. However, as discussed in Chapter Two, legitimate arguments could be raised respecting the actual age at which children became competent to care for themselves and contribute to their own, or their family's, economic well-being.

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[68] The Palliser's Triangle area lies in the southern portions of Saskatchewan and Alberta, bordered to the west and north by the Regina Plain and to the east by the edge of the Missouri Coteau. This zone is generally more rolling than the rest of the prairies, and is divided by deep river valleys and coulees created by wind and water erosion. It is less suited to crop farming than the rest of the region as a result of differences in soil fertility and moisture levels. The light brown prairie soil with little decomposing vegetable matter is the poorest agricultural land in the prairies but does offer potential as a ranching area if large sections could be allocated to pasturing livestock rather than planting wheat (Dawson and Younge, 1940).

[69] The Red River Valley, with an average elevation of 800 feet above sea level, is located in south central Manitoba running from the U.S. border to Lake Winnipeg. The valley was once the bed of a large lake fed by melting glaciers but during the study period, the zone possessed "fertile *black meadow soil* from 4 to 12 inches in depth", a longer growing season than on the rest of the prairies, a high mean summer temperature and a high soil moisture content (Dawson and Younge,1940, p.

These transition points, from dependent youngster to competent child to independent adult, were aspects of cultural beliefs that defined both childhood and appropriate behavior patterns for children. Opinions as to when competency was likely to be achieved, when children could begin working and when adult status would be attained were also likely to shift over time depending on the social, cultural and ethical beliefs and values that applied to the individuals under study (Cunningham, 1995; Grootaert and Patrinos, 1999). While chronological age has generally been utilized in modern western societies to determine status, the decision points were different for those raised under other social conditions and in different historical eras. In many cases, childhood effectively ended when the 'child' showed his or her independence by making a major contribution to the family welfare or chose to live with the burdens of adult responsibility.

Given the flexibility evident in the concept of childhood, it was necessary to ascertain the historical attitudes of the people of the Canadian prairies toward children's work before fixing the age brackets for the study. As noted in Chapter Two, attitudes respecting childhood and the use of children's labour were in the process of changing at the turn of the century but for those in the farming

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4). As such, Manitoba's Red River zone has been one of the prime agricultural production areas in the prairies since it was settled.

occupation, the use of child labour was a necessity. As such, it became clear that in defining 'children' for the purposes of the study, the age limits chosen would have to reflect prairie realities. Given these factors, it was decided that for this study, children would be defined as including all those individuals between, and including, four and sixteen years of age. This bracket allowed for the earliest commencement of work recorded in the study documents (and in earlier studies discussed in Chapter Two) while the upper limit of sixteen was chosen (rather than eighteen when young men would be entitled to obtain their own homesteads) for two reasons. Firstly, once the children discussed in this study reached their teens, many were acting as adults in terms of handling work loads just as heavy as those taken on by their parents. Secondly, and more importantly, very few documents providing information on the work of teenagers over the age of fourteen were located for study and as such, little could be said respecting their working behavior. Whether this was because heavy work commitments stopped older teens from writing, or they saw nothing interesting to write about after they grew older, or work was just such a natural and expected part of their lives that they saw no reason to remember or mention it is unknown but the practical effect was a shortage of information and the decision to limit the age groupings accordingly to those for whom records did remain. However, flexibility was exercised in using information and if the document indicated that a person was working for the family at an older age, their comments were considered in analyzing children's actions.

4) *Defining the Study Population*

Individuals with ethnic ties to Great Britain (England, Scotland, and Ireland) formed the largest group of settlers in the prairie region throughout the study time frame, making up more than sixty percent of the population in each Census (2nd Census of Canada, 1891; 5th Census of Canada, 1911). However, large number of individuals from a variety of other backgrounds also became pioneers. For example, in 1911, 12 percent of the population were of German descent, 9 percent Austro-Hungarian, 6 percent Scandinavian, 6 percent French, 3 percent Russian, 1 percent Jewish, and 1 percent Dutch.

Given these considerations, it is not surprising to find that by 1916, English was the mother-tongue for 63.3 percent of the population.[70] As such, those with British backgrounds capable of producing documents in English were in the majority and the chance of successfully locating source materials attributable to British children was higher than for other groups.[71]

With this emphasis on English-speaking individuals, problems associated with incorporating documents by other cultures were waylaid. For example, problems could have arisen with particular stories if they were prepared in a language other than English. Firstly, the researcher's primary language is English and as such, translation would be required before a 'foreign language' document could be used. Secondly, an improper translation could lead to the misunderstanding of information provided by a settler child and thirdly, translation costs could quickly become excessive as the relevancy of any particular document would be unknown before the translation was performed. As such, and in combination with the fact that the likelihood of locating English language documents was higher than for those written in other tongues, it was decided that the study materials would be limited to those written in English. It was recognized that this language requirement imposed an artificial limit on the variety of data that could be expected but in actuality, the language concern proved to be largely unfounded. Only four documents had to be rejected from the study due to language difficulties. The overwhelming majority of the materials located were written in English and were thus utilized in the research to obtain as broad and comprehensive a view of work during the pioneer period as possible.[72]

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[70] This information was drawn from the 1916 Census, as 'mother-tongue' was not calculated for the population before this report.

[71] Determining the ethnicity of the children with certainty proved to be a virtually impossible task. Most of the child authors did not mention their country of origin in their stories. For the few that did, they were not necessarily of the implied ethnic background as, for example, English-speaking immigrants from the United States may have originated elsewhere. Further, many women writing their memoirs used their married names; not their family name which also added a layer of confusion to the situation and for those of mixed parentage, a choice between the ethnic and cultural backgrounds of the mother and father would have to be made without knowing which, if either, set of traditions and beliefs applied within the household.

5) Research Method: Socio-Historical Analysis

The term 'socio-historical' analysis is utilized to convey the fact that despite the historical nature of the research required to investigate child labour on pioneer family farms, a sociological interpretation of the raw data was also necessary. The organization of the reports made by almost 300 children of both genders and various ages concerning dozens of types of tasks that they performed had to be accomplished before the more detailed analysis of factors that may have influenced child labour could be undertaken in a systematic fashion. Historical research, particularly in terms of documentary analysis, is limited to those items that have survived the passage of time and been made accessible and as such, the material must be reviewed carefully for data relevant to the study. Without the organizing principles provided by the categorization of data on work tasks by the social and economic contributions they made, the research would have been less focused and prone to providing an overwhelming flood of inter-connected work data rather than information that could be used to answer the questions posed in this project.

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[72] This is not to say that research directed specifically toward detecting aspects of children's labour that differ from those identified and categorized in this study should not be conducted by researchers familiar with the written language of particular study groups. Rather, such cultural studies are for the future and are beyond the scope of this research effort.

As the research time frame required investigation of activity occurring a century in the past, only a limited number of possible methods for collecting necessary data were available. Personal interviews or a review of documents delineating the activities of children were the only feasible options and given the lack of available sources due to the passage of time, written records of the period were utilized.[73] Documents of every kind, official and unofficial, formal and informal, first-hand accounts and collected stories, all became potential sources of information. Newspapers published for the settler market, advertising brochures, and Census reports were all reviewed as part of this research process. As a number of letters discussing children's work on prairie farms were located early in the research process and provided a disproportionate amount of information on children in Manitoba (of the 178 letters examined, 116 had been written by children living on farms in Manitoba with only 32 letters from Saskatchewan, 22 from Alberta and 8 that had been mailed from unknown locations), subsequent searches at various archives were directed at redressing this imbalance.[74] Thus, the

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[73] Of these potential approaches, the best means of gathering personal information respecting children's work on the farms would have been to interview a broad selection of subjects who participated in the farm settlement process. First hand accounts from such sources would have provided a wealth of detailed information on the labour activities of these individuals as they strove to operate ongoing family farms. In the context of an interview, the source could have been

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questioned to determine the personal context within which such labour was performed. Such an effort to discover the personal and family expectations, priorities, and time spent on various tasks, coupled with questions as to both the quantity and quality of the labour performed would have lifted the veil surrounding children's work and the inter-relationships between children and their parents under difficult circumstances.

However, in the absence of potential subjects, only documentary evidence remains as a potential source. With such evidence, there is no opportunity to question the writer, obtain additional details or information to place the document in context, or to return and conduct follow-up interviews after analysis began and questions arose. The investigation is limited to utilizing only the information the writer saw fit to include, not the data best suited to the research undertaken (See Bailey's (1987) discussion regarding disadvantages associated with document study). As such, it is necessary to accept the documents with all of their shortcomings and disadvantages as they represent the best evidence available for this study. If they are lacking in detail, written in a variety of styles, contain exaggerations or insufficient background information, or reflect a writer's idealized recollections of his or her childhood circumstances, these defects must be accommodated to ensure that relevant information is not lost. Further, the fact that an author may have written their stories from memory and thus glossed over negative recollections or exaggerated their role to some degree does not necessarily detract from the usefulness of the information conveyed in this instance. The documents did not contain sufficient particulars to allow the revelation of detailed accounts of work but this focus also means that memories of what was done are needed, not moment-by-moment descriptions that would be more easily forgotten with the passage of time.

[74] Ultimately, the study was conducted with 121 children from Manitoba, 62 from Saskatchewan and 46 from Alberta with 24 additional children who had not identified their point of residence. These final figures are thus roughly proportional to the relative population balances between the provinces in 1901 (based on the population of each province in 1901, the provincial ratios were 255,211 to 91,278 to 73,022 or 2.8/1 for Manitoba and Saskatchewan and 1.2/1 for Saskatchewan and Alberta. The comparable ratios for the study population were 3.6/1 and 1.4/1. The ratios shifted between 1901 and 1913 to heavily favor Saskatchewan and Alberta as new immigrants flooded into the available lands but prior to 1901, the center of population tended to be Manitoba.

pursuit of information focused largely on documents prepared by individuals personally involved in the settlement process stored at the main prairie archives located in Regina and Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, and Edmonton and Calgary, Alberta. A search for relevant documents was also undertaken at the Alexander Gault Museum and Archive located in Lethbridge, Alberta.

The private documents that were located were of diverse types including lengthy personal writings such as diaries and memoirs, autobiographies, family histories, poems, and stories, plus shorter writings such as letters submitted by children and others to prairie newspapers and relatives.[75] Ultimately, the materials collected and reviewed consisted of over 275 of these letters, memoirs, interview transcripts, diaries, autobiographies and family histories plus eleven items that had been published in book form. Of the published books, three were 'self-published

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In terms of the gender distribution of the study population, Table K of Appendix 2 notes that documents from 131 boys and 122 girls were included in the study (with 7 written by children of unknown gender). As shown in the cross-tabulation set out in Table A of Appendix 2, the two groups were unevenly divided across the region with 71 boys and 50 girls reporting residence in Manitoba, followed by Saskatchewan with 35 boys and 27 girls. Alberta was the lowest with 26 boys and 20 girls. In terms of age groupings, Table B of Appendix 2 reveals that of the 260 children, 30 were of an unknown age and 7 of unknown sex. Of the remaining 223 children, there were a total of 115 boys and 108 girls. Three of these boys were under the age of 6 and an additional seven were between 6 and 8 years of age. However, the vast majority of boys were in the older age brackets including forty between 9 and 11 years of age, fifty-three between 12 and 14 and an additional twelve were older than 14. For girls, the age distribution was similar although there were no girls who noted being under the age of 6. Nine were in the 6 to 8 year group and thirty-two were between 9 and 11 years old. The largest group of girls (sixty), were in the 12 to 14 year age group with only seven being older than this.

[75] As the letters sent to the newspaper were not spontaneous revelations and may have been carefully drafted (with the assistance of parents or older siblings in the case of younger 'writers') to meet the standards of the publisher, they do not contain details of abuse, over-work, punishment or other negative perspectives of life on a family farm during the pioneering period. However, they do provide a glimpse into the details of children's work during the settlement process that is clear and directed at the issue central to this research, the labour activities of farm children. As such, these letters are meaningful artifacts of the period and valuable sources of necessary information.

by the authors (Murray, 1982; Pratt, 1996; and Stewart, 1962), four were autobiographies published by book companies (Caswell, 1964; Hiemstra, 1997; Merriken, 1999; and Minifie, 1972), two diaries were included in a collection of memoirs (Adamowska, 1978 and Farion, 1978), and the final two books were prepared by sons of the women involved, namely Nellie Hislop (Nuffield, 1987) and Sarah Roberts (Roberts, 1971), based on diaries left by these women. Some of these documents contained highly detailed accounts of the work that children performed on the farm, information on the lives and attitudes of farming families, and particulars of work practices and gender impacts on work roles but many dealt almost exclusively with work activity on the farm.

As mentioned earlier, it was determined that these materials would be subjected to analysis by means of intense individual scrutiny to locate and isolate relevant information respecting children's work that was intermingled with other personal memories. Each document was also scanned for the identity of the writer, birth dates, farm location, information on family goals, details on the family structure, and the types of crops and animals being grown or raised. In addition, references to the type and amount of work the child was involved in, the types of work handled by siblings, the tools and implements used, indications of parental working behavior and information on the family's history were all pursued in the hope of obtaining a more detailed picture of settler life.

This sort of intense review was necessary both to accumulate the needed information in usable form and to interpret the documents, many of which were written when the authors were children and their writing skills were less than optimal. For example, ten-year-old W.H. Clements' letter had to be read carefully given his 'original' spelling methods. For example, he noted that his "school mattes all wrought a letter… so [he] thought [he] would wright too. [He] was the most atenddence at [their] school …[and lived] half a mile frdm the school" (Clements, 1902, p. 333). Other individuals had poor literacy skills even when their memoirs were written at an older age. Information then had to be extracted from personal ramblings that did not pertain to the study. For example, eighty-four-year-old Lucy Cannon (1980, p. 1) had either never learned proper composition techniques or could not organize her thoughts at the time of writing. She told of several interesting aspects of farm work but they were too disjointed and unorganized to use:

> Stones, we picked the smaller ones the same way, Beautiful large violets, crocuses, buttercups, lilies, blue bells Strawberries, wild, red, plentiful all around the sloughs Helping Dad plant hundreds of wee trees, for wind break. Prairie fire often set by train sparks, burnt grass crops for mile Pedlars, walking, gypsies, Indians riding, asking for bread and egg Broke my arm…

Luckily, most of the documents were more easily read than Lucy's memoir or at least contained some information as to the location of the farm, the age of the author when working on the farm, and the year or period about which they were writing.

Other documents were problematic in that while they were well written, they provided detailed listings of the work that they were involved without putting the labour in context. For example, ten-year-old Charlie Arnold from Indian Head, Saskatchewan wrote the following letter to The Nor'-West Farmer in 1901 (p. 598) and provided good information on what he did but nothing on the time frame involved, the frequency of performing these tasks or the size of the family and farm:

> I know how to plough and can bind a little, harrow, level with the sod crusher and I am learning to sow wheat. I have a cow and calf to tend to. I have two horses to tend to and a garden. I can rake hay and I am learning to mow.

Other information was set out orally. The oral recordings and/or transcripts lacked a sense of organization and the stories did not flow together as the questions interjected by the interviewer broke up the continuity of the speaker's thoughts. On other occasions, the speaker was allowed to go on at length about minute details that seemed to be outside of the interviewer's interest or plan. As such, each item reviewed was unique, the relevant data in the writings tended to be somewhat disorganized and was often dispersed throughout the document or mixed in with other information that was interesting but not useful for study purposes.

Beyond the documents prepared by pioneer children, materials (primarily letters) written by adult residents of the prairies that were published in English-language newspapers available to farmers, were also of assistance. They provided background information respecting the beliefs and attitudes under which children worked, particularly as to whether children should work at all and the 'proper' types of work for boys and girls. The settlers did not operate in a vacuum and create totally new rules of behaviour as they went along, rather, they imported certain attitudes and beliefs with them, mainly from the British Isles (in terms of the population studied) and interacted, even if only to read or hear about the views of others, with the broader society. As such, these documents could potentially identify limits on acceptable behaviour, both as to child labour and gender or age roles, or identify shifts in attitudes within the developing prairie culture.

It should be noted that while the information obtained respecting the working activities of settler children was extensive, the study of these documents also provided a degree of original information concerning the activities and attitudes of their parents. The stories set out in the diaries and other materials suggested that many parents worked 'hand-in-hand' with their children, both boys and girls, to perform many of their tasks. This cooperation extended not only to the day-to-day labour required to keep the farm operating smoothly but also to the heavy labour required to create the farm out of the undeveloped prairie.

5) A Typology of Children's Labour in the Operation of Prairie Farms

When reviewing the documents for data on the work performed by children, particular attention was paid to identifying not only the work tasks handled by children that related to the operation of prairie farms but also the context in which these tasks were carried out. By understanding the intended outcome of the task, children's work could be classified by the nature of the labour in terms of whether it was productive (directed at producing commodities for the market),[76] entrepreneurial (devoted to raising funds for the family),[77] subsistence (used to produce products directly for family consumption) or domestic (directed at family lifestyle, carrying on day-to-day household tasks, and the conversion of subsistence items into consumable form). By categorizing the 'nature' of the work performed by children, an organized labour typology could be created for use in identifying the type of contribution made to the farming operation by pioneer children. This typology was, in turn, used to organize further analysis of the data obtained to determine, for example, whether gender or age differences could be identified in the types of contribution children made or in the specific types of work performed. Depending on the information revealed by the historical documents studied, other possible variables that could potentially influence the application of children's labour might also have been identified and analyzed based on this categorization.

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[76] The term 'productive labour' is oriented to the Marxist approach but does not rely on the Marxist definition as settlers represented both capital (land and machinery) and labour as they performed much of their own work. However, the ultimate meaning, labour that produces commodities for sale in a market place, carries through.

[77] Entrepreneurship is used in this context to identify alternate ways of using personal labour to generate funds that are not associated with the family enterprise, rather than as a designator of new approaches to performing the same work so as to enhance profits.

To establish the labour categories for this research, the documents created by children were first examined for commonly reported work tasks and a rough assessment of the frequency at which various tasks were reported was developed. These tasks, for example plowing, gardening, collecting fruit, operating a harrow, clearing brush and so on were then reviewed, the nature of the contribution determined, and they were then collected under the appropriate labour designation. The labour types noted by at least 50 of the 260 children in the study were identified, the tasks linked to them noted, and the documents were then re-examined to determine the categories of labour related to the various children in the study.[78]

As may be seen in the Child Labour Typology set out below, various sub-categories of specific work tasks were combined to establish the labour category. However, several tasks overlap and thus may be found in different labour categories depending upon the intended outcome of the work. For example, livestock production (productive labour), raising animals for sale (entrepreneurial labour) and animal products (subsistence labour) all involve children working with and raising animals. Milk is collected, cream separated, butter made, eggs gathered, fleece taken and animals are slaughtered and thus, any of these tasks could apply to any of the three categories. It is only the context revealed by the document that determines the appropriate labour category.

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[78] While the four labour categories associated with farming operations are discussed in Chapters Five to Eight, a fifth category, labour directed at the construction of farm homes and other infrastructure, was not included in the typology. This work was performed before the actual operation of the farm began and only 22 children noted involvement in such tasks. Although they are not included in the labour typology, their work experiences were of interest and their stories are thus included in Chapter Four to provide perspective on the work performed once farming operations were underway.

CHILD LABOUR TYPOLOGY

Productive Labour

Fieldwork:	haying; ploughing; harrowing; using a gang plow or walking plow; breaking the sod; leveling; sowing; seeding; mowing; raking hay; stacking; binding; stooking; loading; discing; storing the crop; pitching sheaves; cultivating; threshing.
Livestock Production:	milk/milking; driving; hunting for livestock; feeding; watering; herding; selling.
Working with horses:	harness; driving horses; hitching the team/ buggy; working a team.
Stable chores:	cleaning stalls; hauling manure.
Transporting crops:	driving wheat to town/elevator.
Clearing fields:	picking stones/rocks; pulling scrub/weeds; digging roots.
Chores/ Running Errands/Helping:	running errands, doing outdoor chores, helping; doing all forms of farm-work.

Entreprenuerial Labour

Paid Employment:	paid; field hand; employed; work.

Raising Animals for Sale:	owns calf/pig/poultry/horse/chickens/ ducks/geese/turkey/rabbits; sells milk; sells butter; sells eggs.
Gopher Bounties and Trapping:	gopher hunting; trapping; shooting gophers; snaring gophers.
Sales of Fruit and Other Produce:	sells berries/jam/preserves/fruit; sells produce.

Subsistence Labour

Obtaining Water:	hauling water; water barrels; filtering water; digging wells.
Obtaining Fuel:	gathering firewood; chopping down trees; cutting wood; hauling wood; stacking wood; lighting fires; gathering buffalo chips; collecting coal.
Animal Products:	feeding; watering; cleaning stalls or pens; milking; gathering eggs to eat; slaughtering; killing chickens; plucking feathers; hens, chickens, turkeys, ducks, poultry; slopping pigs; skinning rabbits; churning butter; separating cream.
Hunting and Fishing:	hunting rabbits/ prairie chickens/geese/ducks/quail; fishing.
Gardening and Harvesting Wild Fruits and Vegetables:	gardening; growing vegetables such as cucumbers, onions, potatoes, carrots, peas, turnips, beets, and beans; hunting for berries.
Protection of the Family from Insects and Other Animal Life:	insects, bugs, mosquitoes, bears, coyotes.
Protection of the Family from Prairie Fires:	helping to put out fires.

Domestic Labour

Food Preparation:	peeling potatoes; baking cakes or pies; making pudding; cooking meat; preparing supper/ dinner/breakfast.
Washing Clothes and Making Beds:	hauling water for washing clothes; adding soap; stomping with feet to wash clothes; making beds.
Cleaning the Home and its Contents:	scrubbing/washing the floor; sweeping; ironing; washing/drying dishes; setting the table; dusting; cleaning and blacking the stove; helping mother.
Sewing, Knitting and Crocheting:	knitting; darning; crocheting; making clothes; doing fancy work; making aprons and print-waists; braids straw.
Caring for Children:	caring for younger siblings; looking after siblings/other children.

Assignment to productive labour required the use of one or more of the particular words, phrases, or descriptive terms set out to the right of each sub-category but also an indication that the activity was a family commercial activity. Thus, references to selling an animal or its products, dealing with a large number of animals (more than 10) or handling large volumes of milk, cream, butter, eggs or fleece (drawn from more than 10 animals or 25 poultry) were used to separate animals destined for the market from those kept for personal consumption. [79]

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[79] The decision to use 10 animals as a cut-off point was arbitrary, to a degree. The writings of most children were inconclusive as to the destiny of larger herds of cattle or other stock but it is unlikely that farmers would hold more than 10 animals for personal use. They would require feed, water and care for several years even if 3 were slaughtered each year. Calves (or lambs or piglets or chicks) would maintain the supply and holding that many animals would also provide a cushion for losses to predators, the weather or disease. The poultry limit was set at 25 birds as their size makes them

Entrepreneurial activity also required a reference to sale (but with the animal identified as belonging to the child) and subsistence labour was identified by references to family consumption of the animal or its products, or references to smaller numbers of animals for family use. Where other such overlaps occurred, similar distinctions based on references to items as being for sale, bounty hunting, or the intended use for the water or feed being hauled and the animals in the stalls or pens being cleaned, were also used to categorize the tasks referred to by the children.

6) Summary

As discussed earlier, this research effort is being conducted to gain information on children's labour through the use of a socio-historical methodology. The stories told by the children themselves respecting their experiences on the family farm are the primary source of information utilized in this research and to the degree possible, results and conclusions are drawn from these stories. To focus this research, parameters were set to limit the study to dealing with the labour activities of children (defined as those between four and sixteen inclusive) who resided in the prairie region (the lands within the current day borders of the provinces of Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta) between 1871 and 1913, and wrote their memories down for posterity in English.

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single meal animals and the need for a regular supply of eggs for eating meant a higher number might conceivably be kept on the farm strictly for family consumption.

It is recognized that using historical documents as a source of data places a burden on the researcher to ensure that the limitations of the available record are made clear. As such, it is noted that the historical record of children's work is likely to be incomplete due to the passage of time, loss of materials, a failure of many settlers to record their experiences, the inaccuracy of memory in recording events after-the-fact, tendencies to recall childhood events in a romanticized or idealized fashion, and the fact that not all existing material is open to public scrutiny. Where the writing of children is involved, additional limitations exist as it is unlikely that a child under the age of seven or eight years could write without assistance (and interpretation) by someone older, making the story told an edited version of reality. Further, deliberate or inadvertent censorship of letters, even for spelling or grammatical reasons, could provide a false view of life on the prairies and eliminate stories of abuse, poverty, or suffering that would tarnish the image of the region that the publishers wished to convey. Even where 'censorship' was not an issue, children might have a tendency to embellish or exaggerate stories which proved their value to the family or, as adults writing their memoirs, to record their deeds as more heroic than they may have been.

While such concerns raise issues respecting the completeness, accuracy, reliability and validity of the information obtained and the conclusions drawn from these sources, it is suggested that any such critique be muted in this case. The majority of the documents used in the study were written at or near the time that the work was performed and in addition, the stories tend to be consistent and repetitive in discussing the types of labour that children performed. This could be coincidence but the frequency of repetition is such that the stories become inter-supportive, especially as various types of documents were analyzed and found to contain consistent data. Further, the stories of these children cannot be given voice without adopting their tone and accepting their reality, as to do otherwise would be to redraft their histories from a foreign perspective with no guarantee that the results would be accurate.

Thus, despite such potential concerns, the intensive review of all of the historical documents that were located has revealed valuable information on children's labour during the settlement period. While the focus was on the labour of children, analysis of the materials also revealed information respecting the inter-relationship of adult and child labour in the process of creating and operating family farms. These documents also contained some information on the family histories of the children along with their views, beliefs and attitudes toward work and thus generated a more in-depth picture of children's work during the study time frame.

CHAPTER FOUR

PRAIRIE ATTITUDES TOWARD CHILDREN'S WORK, AND INITIAL DEMANDS PLACED ON THEIR LABOUR

The purpose of this Chapter is to open discussion of the actual use of children's labour on prairie farms. As such, Section one of this Chapter begins with a brief discussion of the labour-intensive nature of the effort required to establish and operate farms in the prairie region, and the expressed attitudes of prairie residents as to the desirability of such labour. The statements of both farming and non-farming residents of the prairies suggest that child labour on farms was enthusiastically endorsed as beneficial to a labour-intensive enterprise, but was also seen as a positive force in a child's life that would be of advantage to them in future endeavors.

Section 2 details the labour contribution of children to the process of utilizing available resources and labour power to construct necessary shelter. Whether the family found itself using trees, sod, or mud or clay 'plaster' in this process, the work was difficult and exhausting. For those without the funds to employ workers for this task, having a family present could be a blessing as the extra labour power would allow a division of the work among more hands and an easing of the burden on each individual.

Section three completes the Chapter with a summary of the findings respecting children's work on farm construction and notes that children were involved in some of the more physically demanding and dangerous aspects of pioneer farming, not just simple chores. Children were co-workers on pioneer farms, not merely apprentices performing light duties.[80]

1) The Labour Needs of the Pioneer Family Farm

Given that settlers brave or strong-willed enough to enter the prairie region faced the prospect of having to literally build their enterprise from the ground up, the need for labour power, both human and animal, was extreme as the implements settlers had to rely on were all muscle-powered.[81] Wagons, stone boats, walking plows, harrows, and seeders were all drawn by horses or oxen, while hand tools such as scythes, pitchforks, axes, hoes, and rakes all relied upon the power of the settler wielding them.[82] Thus, every aspect of the development process and all phases of operating a farm as an ongoing business were labour-intensive and depending upon muscle power to develop and then operate a farm meant that leisure was virtually non-existent and progress was slow. In other words, life on the frontier was difficult and filled with hard work.

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[80] Given that the information set out in this chapter is intended to place the four chapters dealing with children's labour in context, the work involved in setting up the home is not included in the typology. As noted earlier, the study focuses on productive, entrepreneurial, subsistence and domestic labour, all aspects of work relating to ongoing farming operations, not the construction process. In any event, only ten boys reported working on any aspect of the building process and of these, two mentioned stacking hay into 'hay barns', one spoke of chinking cracks, one built a sod dog house, one a sod chicken coop and four boys assisted with log homes or fences. One was involved with plastering the family 'doby'. As such, the effort of most boys was minimal. Similarly, only twelve girls mentioned construction work and of these, two chinked walls and three helped with decorations. The remaining girls, however, worked hard at digging cellars (one girl), hauling sod on sacks (one girl), laying shingles (two girls), driving a wagon used in fencing (one girl) and helping to collect and shape logs for the house (two girls).

[81] Powered machinery such as self-propelled tractors did not become readily available in the west until late in the study period and as such, played little role in establishing or operating settler farms (Warren, 1917).

[82] In his self-published book respecting his family's homestead, W. Roland Murray (1982, p. 19C) provided descriptions of a number of implements used by the early farmers. For example, the "stone boat" was a sled with (removable) walls generally "used on ploughed land for the removal of stone that was turned up by the plow while breaking new land". A walking plow had a single curved blade that cut through the sod and turned the soil over to destroy roots and bring a fresh nutrient-rich layer to the surface of the field. The walking plow, unlike other models, was made for small-scale operations as it was designed to be pulled by "one horse" and was "steered by one

Given the need to comply with government regulations respecting the breaking of land and building a home and the survival imperative of locating sources of water, food and fuel, the first season on the homestead could be particularly intense. Following the establishment of the farm, the need for labour continued as buildings, fences, fields and the home had to be maintained, and the natural assets of the homestead had to be converted to marketable crops, livestock, food and ultimately cash resources each year. However, the margin between success and failure in frontier farming was so slim that one farm management specialist, G.F. Warren, defined success as "raising each summer a little more than enough food and clothing for the winter" (1917, p. 4). Thus, in his view, labour-intensive farming would not make settlers rich quickly but if sufficient effort was invested in the operation, it could support the farming family on a year-to-year basis. Only by increasing the available labour power could more rapid progress be

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person". Unlike a plow, harrows were used for shallow tilling of land that had already been broken. Made up of a number of steel 'spikes' mounted on a frame so that the spikes could be pulled through the upper layer of the soil, "for breaking up lumps…and for leveling and seed bed preparation", the harrow was a versatile tool but did not turn the soil. Finally, cultivators were also in use and they were, in effect, large harrows. The larger spikes on a cultivator and the ability to add additional sets of spikes on the unit to broaden its coverage ensured that it processed more ground than a harrow but did not dig as deep or turn the soil over like a plow.

made and for settlers with limited funds, this meant increasing the size of their family.

In order to utilize the available family labour efficiently, and in accordance with the customs of western-European families of the era, a gendered division of labour existed between adult men and women in farming situations.[83] Men generally handled work activities relating to the performance of heavy labour such as felling trees and hauling rocks, but also took on the production of cash crops and livestock thereby maintaining control over the financial affairs of the farm. Women performed subsistence labour and domestic tasks suited to their 'natural' ability to care for others by taking charge of the home and seeing to the washing and ironing of clothes, cooking, sewing and cleaning (Rasmussen et.al., 1976). However, the division of labour was not exclusive as women could be called upon to assist their husbands with the fieldwork at any point when needed despite the fact that men seldom reciprocated with household chores (Bennett, Kohl and Binion, 1982; Cohen, 1988; Kohl, 1977; Sachs, 1983).[84]

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[83] See the discussion of gender, patriarchy and the division of labour between men and women in farm families during the late 19th century by Cohen (1988) and Ursel (1992) in Chapter Three.

[84] This facet of the division of labour between men and women was clearly recognized by farmers as evidenced by a letter published in a July, 1900, issue of The Nor'-West Farmer. The writer, J.L. Tipping of Waghorn, Alberta, was clearly sympathetic to the plight of women and made a point of addressing the issue with humor. Tipping wrote that while men often expected their wives to "help them with their outdoor work", few men would reciprocate (1900, p. 563). As the writer phrased the situation:

> I wonder what the average man would say, if his wife said to him some morning, 'Abijah, dear, I have a big washing on hand to-day, also bread to bake, etc., I wish you would darn Kitchener's stockings before he goes to school, and after that is done help me prepare the dinner for the hired men… (Tipping, 1900, p. 563).

Regardless of the inequity of the division of work between adults, the benefits of working together for the farm were clear and obvious. With two adults available, the amount of work that could be performed would be increased in comparison to the capacity of a single settler attempting to balance all of the tasks necessary to establish the farm and ensure personal survival on their own.[85] The importance of this ability to distribute work among family members was clearly noted by Cherwinski (1985, pp. 117-118) who indicated that:

> It presented the potential for growth of the labor force within the family, it created the possibility of diversification into poultry and livestock, it promised an improved standard of living which went with a more pleasant environment, and it solved the problem of isolation.

In short, having the assistance of one or more family members made life more agreeable but at the same time, enhanced the chances of success.

The difficulty of dealing with all of the demands on a single settler's time was discussed by Herbert Stringer (1888) who farmed near Edmonton, Alberta in the late 1800s. Herbert had never married and therefore lived through the deprivation and hardships that were an individual's companions on the prairies. Constant work improving the farm meant ignoring personal needs such as decent food, clean and repaired clothing and the maintenance of reasonable conditions within the home. However, too much attention to the 'niceties' of living could mean a failure to accomplish all of the tasks needed to produce crops or complete other necessary projects on time. Having help on hand could solve such concerns and at the same time, hold the loneliness of a single life in a shack on the 'empty' prairies at bay. Stringer (1888, p. 2), clearly recognized how he had ruined his own life in the prairie region and thus wrote to advise others before they entered the same trap:

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[85] As stated by Warren (1917, p. 8), "a single man or woman finds it difficult to manage a farm successfully. One may succeed in a city whether he has a family or not, but on a farm the chances

> By all means… young fellows should come out here (anything over 15's old enough) but they ought to get married or arrange with some girl to come out to them as soon as they are fixed. I neglected this [and] have payed for it ever since. Baching is universally allowed to be one of the curses of the American west.

While women had a necessary part to play in the performance of tasks on the farm, their importance extended beyond that of subsidiary workers performing physical labour in the home, garden or field. Their significance in a farming situation could also be found in the mother role as they were responsible for creating a labour advantage over the long term (Neth, 1995; Sachs, 1983 and Tilly and Scott, 1987). Each birth would temporarily reduce the woman's physical labour potential as a portion of her time would be devoted to nurturing the child but the more children she bore, and the older they grew, the greater their compensating labour input would be (Sharif, 1993). As such, women were as, or more important to, the operation of a farm over the long-term, as men.

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are much better for married persons."

As noted above, the usefulness of children on a settler farm depended to some degree on their age. The physical strength, natural abilities and skills of the child would all increase with time and training[86] but even so, the additional labour power provided by any child capable of following instructions would have the potential to increase the likelihood of succeeding at creating and operating a family farm. The argument, that even young children could provide benefits for the family with their work, was widely accepted in the prairie region during the settlement period as shown by the written comments of numerous individuals. For example, an anonymous contributor to the 'Household' column of The Nor'-West Farmer in 1899 scoffed at those who felt that a child could not contribute to the farming process and argued:

> If any say a small child cannot earn his keep let those who are blest with such help send the child away for a month into some family where they are not in possession of such help, and two families will have learned something to the advantage of humanity (p. 817).

Similarly, a number of women residing on the prairies indicated in their responses to a questionnaire sent out by the Montreal Herald in 1885 that settlers would be wise to have their children on the farm from the outset. These women, answering the question "Would you recommend an emigrant to bring his wife and family with him, or leave them behind till he has a home ready for them?" (Montreal

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[86] See Kohl (1976), Light, Hertsgaard and Martin (1985) and Stansell (1976).

Herald, 1886, p. 1), were most enthusiastic about bringing the family along to share in the farm labour or earn income for the family.

For example, the response of Mrs. Helen Bell indicated that she was in favor of bringing her children west to help with the farm. The sincerity of her statement was unquestionable as she had moved all eight of her children to the prairies without waiting for her husband to complete all of the work necessary to establish a comfortable home for them all (Montreal Herald, 1886, p. 5). While Helen Bell did not expressly mention the advantages that could be gained if children were brought to the west, the benefits were noted by several other women who responded to the survey, including Mrs. J.D. Hanson. She suggested that financial gains were possible as "[if] a son and daughter came with the father, they could go and work out [take on a paid job]…", but for Mrs. A. G. McDonald, the advantage lay in the fact that "a man cannot farm alone very well", implying that children would best be of assistance by helping with the work of the farm (Montreal Herald, 1886, pp. 4-5). A very strong positive opinion was also expressed by Mrs. G. M. Yeoman who indicated that settlers should bring along "every chick and child, unless there is some strong reason for not doing so; they will all help to pull through; and feel all the better for having done so, even if it is a severe tug. I speak from experience" (Montreal Herald, 1886, p. 4).

However, three women did sound a cautionary note concerning children. Mrs. G. Butcher (Montreal Herald, 1886, p. 4) who, while indicating that families should be brought west to establish the homesteads, argued that only healthy wives and good-sized children could be of assistance in the heavy work needed to set up a farm. Mrs. J. Sutherland (Montreal Herald, 1886, p. 5) mentioned that only strong families "willing to work" were needed and the same sort of qualifier appeared in the answer of Mrs. George Cheasley who said that "if the family is small, leave them [at home until the initial work is complete]; if grown up, bring them. There will be lots of work for them" (Montreal Herald, 1886, p. 5).

Thus, in the opinion of many prairie residents, children could provide an advantage for their families with their work. In other words, the extra labour power provided by children would increase the family's capacity for work, opening up the possibility for more produce to be grown, for expansion of the family's holdings, and for improvements in living conditions.[87] Aside from the potential work-related benefits associated with having children, relying on family members for support also made practical financial sense. With a wife and children resident on the farm, a constantly available source of labour could be maintained with little cost. Unlike hired hands, family members would not have to be paid a wage and scarce cash resources would not have to be depleted when additional labour was required for a particular project. Further, because of their reliance on the farm's output for their own survival and the emotional ties of the family bond, family members would be more likely to remain loyal and hardworking and not accept alternative offers of employment if their labour power was needed by the family.[88] Working with one's own offspring had the additional advantage of fulfilling the settler's social duty to teach children the customs and values of their lifestyle and communities.

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[87] See Kohl's (1976) discussion of the distribution of labour between all members, adult and child, of farm families. Her study examined farms in southern Saskatchewan in the 1960s but aside from the nature of the equipment utilized, she discovered that work continued to be distributed in the same expected patterns. Heavy labour and market activities fell to the men, domestic matters to the women with children assisting with all activities that they could physically manage. This point is also reviewed by Voisey (1988, p. 91) in terms of the ability of individual settlers to expand their operations by shifting to a 'mixed' farming program based on growing wheat and raising animals for sale or personal consumption. He noted that the "willingness of settlers to stock their own pantries through mixed-farming activity also depended [the first two factors were that the settler had come from an area of the world such as Europe where mixed-farming was a norm, and that prices for commodities remained high] on one social condition more than any other: marriage." Voisey indicated that bachelors had no time to perform the fixed routine of chores necessary to care for animals during the busy times of the crop year and that some did not wish to be tied to their farms in the winter as they preferred to travel to eastern Canada or the southern United States during the winters for the climate and in the hope of locating paid employment for half the year. However, those with wives or children would assign the livestock tasks to them as it would raise

Published statements indicating approval of children's work reflected the beliefs of many farmers. One example of such acceptance of child labour was found in the letter of an Anonymous Reader who contributed to the discussion in a women's section of the 1909 Grain Growers' Guide. She (or he) wrote:

> [Children] should be made to know that they also must do their part and that they may have to make sacrifices to contribute to the welfare of the family as a whole, for the home and family as a whole must come before the individual, unless in case of sickness or misfortune, when natural affection will usually set the pace for all (p. 24).

While child labour would clearly benefit the family and the farming operation, the reasons underlying the approval of the practice were not altogether

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some extra money, feed the family, keep children busy, and train them to the "steady work-habits" they would need as wives or farmers (p. 94).

[88] The availability, low cost and reliability of family members as sources of labour have been discussed by a number of researchers including Easterlin (1976), Neth (1995) and Webb (1989).

selfish and mercenary. Many individuals strongly believed that farm work was highly beneficial for the children themselves. For example, the editor of a farmer oriented American newspaper, The Judd Farmer, wrote an opinion column suggesting that the hard work performed on the farm provided country children with a definite advantage over the "city-bred" who suffered from a weaker constitution, poor morals, poor health and a lack of character because of their upbringing. The "smart air" displayed by city children as a result of their book learning was also discounted by the editor. He argued that the foundation of practical knowledge obtained by a farm child through work and "Nature's school" would place them ahead of those who did not have such advantages growing up. All of these factors led the author to conclude that "[the] farm is the place to rear a family" (Editor, 1898, p. 116).

Comparable sentiments were also expressed by several residents of the prairies, for example, Mrs. F.A. Sanford (1898) of Virden, Manitoba, who wrote of the benefits children enjoyed as a result of their busy farm upbringing. Having the children close by every day allowed the farm family to protect them from the evil influences of decadent city life while ensuring their health and decent development through a program of hard work, healthy food and clean air. The advantages presented by an active life in the clean countryside were also raised by Mrs. Anna Rees in a column written for The Nor'-West Farmer. In her view, the country was an idyllic place to raise children as "[our] children, like our calves and colts, thrive better on good wholesome food and plenty of sunshine and fresh air" (Rees, 1901, p. 148).

On the same topic and perhaps justifying the faith that Mrs. Sanford and Mrs. Rees had in the value of life in the country, Dr. S.J. Evans had written a letter outlining her medical opinion as to the benefits of work for the children to the 'Household' column in an 1898 edition of The Nor'-West Farmer. The letter suggested that children would benefit from:

> a patch of ground to cultivate, rabbits to feed, chickens to take care of, house-birds to attend regularly, or a little detail of cooking or housekeeping for the girls, and an out-door 'chore' for the boys, [as they are] excellent outlets for early energy. There is nothing more hurtful to young children than the 'purring' [soft tones and attitudes] of well-meaning people (p. 521).

Doctor Evans thus appeared to be suggesting that children would lead happier lives if they could work, particularly out of doors, and that the worst thing a parent could do was to provide their offspring with a comfortable, relaxing lifestyle or coddle them.[89] This medical vindication of what might otherwise appear to have been a selfish decision to use children for their labour power, makes it clear that the positive attitude toward children's work was not held solely by farmers. Further, it seems clear that settler families had reason to truly believe that work, and a life close to nature, would produce healthy and contented children attuned to the farming life.

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[89] While work was healthy for children, overwork was not. As noted by Nancy Morrow (1898, p. 131), children were not to be driven to hurt themselves but "every little helps, and by and by they will have done quite a bit of work."

2) Initial Demands on Children's Labour: Establishing Prairie Farms

The belief that work and country living would be beneficial to children was sometimes put into practice immediately upon arrival in the prairie region and several diaries and memoirs spoke to the use of child labour in some of the most dangerous and physically challenging labour projects that would ever take place on the farm. This pre-production work involved the construction of the family home and while this study focuses on the labour of children in the operation of pioneer farms, the story would not be complete if such initial work practices went un-remarked.

For those in the Fertile Crescent or near bodies of water, trees were plentiful and buildings made from logs would have been common. However, few large trees that would provide thick insulating walls existed in most of the prairie region and importing lumber was inconvenient, expensive and somewhat impractical as lumber was so thin that it provided almost no insulation from the climate (Taggart, 1958).[90] The only widely available raw material on the plains was the natural grass that grew almost everywhere and by cutting thick sod blocks from the natural turf, settlers could create functional homes (known as 'soddies') literally out of the ground.[91] The sod hut was thus the shelter of choice in all but the forested areas of the prairies and the extremely arid south where the sod did not grow thick enough to be used for building (Anderson, u.d.). Little choice existed in that area and a tent or a cave dug into the side of a hill would have to suffice if the family lacked skill in building an 'adobie' home with mud or clay plaster. This variety of possible options also led to a number of different tasks that could be assigned to children under the right conditions.

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[90] One example of the poor suitability of lumber homes in prairie conditions was provided by the Hillson family who had built a sixteen-by-twenty-foot home with one room, an attic and no insulation (Taggart, 1958). The house could not be kept warm in the winter and the family decided to build a sod house with thick walls so that they could be comfortable the next winter. Mary Waddell (u.d., p. 5) also noted the problems with heating lumber shacks in her memoir and indicated that "[many] a morning there would be ice in the kettle on the stove & ice on the water pail." Similar complaints were made by other pioneer children including John Watson who believed

In every case, however, the one overriding consistent factor in every family's decision on the type of home to build and whether to utilize child labour in its construction, was time. Construction had to proceed with all possible speed or the family might be left exposed to uncomfortable or dangerous weather conditions (Dawson and Younge, 1940). This result could arise as the weather in

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that he should not have been able to see "out through the roof... [and added that he didn't] know how we could stand the cold them days, gosh the mornings our blankets and our beds would be froze, the blankets would be all froze around your head" (1975, p. 5). Leddie Wilson, a young woman whose family was homesteading at Circus Coulee, Alberta wrote to her sister Dottie in 1902 and described the same sorts of problems with her log house. Wind and snow entered through cracks between the logs, leaving the house so cold that "when all [her] work was done [she] opened the oven door and shoved [her] feet in as far as [she] could get and even then [she] shivered" (Wilson, 1902, pp.1-2). However, Dorthea Calverley (1985) experienced the consequences of poor insulation for wooden structures at a far more personal level. Describing the process of bathing in such a cold shack, Dorthea indicated that the family stove was the primary source of heat for the whole operation. Water had to be boiled to keep things cozy and in her case, the tub was also placed under the open door to the stove so that the heat would circulate around her. Standing in the tub and bending over to grab the soap, Dorthea managed to touch her backside to the door, leaving herself with an identifying brand that few would see.

[91] Soddies could be much warmer than houses built with lumber but even so, the warmth would disappear without the necessary labour being expended on ensuring that the stove was kept burning.

the prairie region tended to extremes of heat, cold, dryness and rain depending on the area in question and death could strike anyone unprepared for the conditions (Hind, 1883). A well-built shelter could prevent such incidents and protect settlers from the rain, snow, wind[92] and sun but only if the necessary labour was invested in building shelter quickly and properly. Even in those areas of southern Alberta and Saskatchewan that benefited from the warming effects of Chinook winds,[93] the only reliable shield from the storms and cold was a house.

While the process of building a soddie was simple, the amount of hard work required was enormous. An initial search for the best sod would be required as, while any mature sod could be used for building, the best material that would not break down in the rain or as a result of freezing, was deep-rooted sod taken from dried slough areas (McLeod, 1977). A strong, if not clean and comfortable

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As stated by Evelyn McLeod (1977, p. 8) "when the thermometer registered 40 to 60 degrees below zero and the fire burned out, the household water pail would contain solid ice by morning."

[92] While a well-built home could provide safety from most weather, some events could not be averted. For example, Lucy Johnson (u.d., p. 16) reported on two storms she had been through on her family homestead near Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, one being a dust storm with a whirlwind that they held at bay by leaning "two ninety-eight pound sacks of flour" against the door, but the other being a tornado "that blew [their] chickens and turkeys away, never to be again."

[93] 'Chinook' was the name given to the dry south-westerly winds that frequently blew across the southern prairies. These winds scoured the moisture out of the area, eroded the land in the summer and could change the weather from freezing to melting temperatures (or vice versa) in hours (Jones, 1987). An example of this weather phenomenon was provided by Wilson (1901) who described a series of warm days caused by Chinook winds in February, 1901. For three days, she noted in her diary that there had been no frost overnight, that snow was melting and that "water [was] running down the creeks and over the prairie in small streams, the dam is full and running over, quite a rush of water coming out of the outlet" (Wilson, 1901, p. 59/306). This changed on the fourth day when the temperature plunged thirty-eight degrees in a few hours. A heavy blizzard with thick snow and gusting winds developed the same day. The blowing snow was dense enough to block vision across the farm yard and it took only a few minutes to go from the point at which there was virtually no snow on the ground to the point at which "the cattle were all covered with snow" (Wilson, 1901, p. 61/304).

home could then be built using locally available resources and muscle power supplied by the settler family.

One of the clearest descriptions of the process followed in building a soddie, and of the role that children might play in the process, was provided by Evelyn McLeod in her 1977 memoir. She was only six years old in 1909 when her family immigrated from North Dakota and thus did not have the strength to lift the blocks of sod that her father sliced out of the ground, but she was observant and remembered the details almost seventy years later. The first step in the building program, after her father used the family breaking plow to obtain long strips of sod sixteen inches wide and four inches thick, was to cut the material into rectangular blocks approximately thirty-two inches long (McLeod, 1977, p. 6).

In building the home, the sod bricks were stacked such that the resulting wall would be thirty-two inches thick to provide the maximum amount of insulation. This meant that, after the necessary overlap of each piece of sod was considered, only eight inches of wall length, at the most, could be achieved with each brick. A twelve foot by twenty foot house would thus require sixty-four linear feet of sod bricks or ninety-six bricks in each layer to achieve the needed perimeter, and the layers then had to be piled to the height necessary for comfort and convenience. It would thus take over 2,304 bricks to achieve an eight-foot ceiling height, even if none of the four-inch thickness of each brick were lost to compression as the weight of each layer pressed down on those below.[94] Given that the roof of such sod structures could either be enclosed with hay or straw thatch, or with sod bricks laid over a crisscrossed framework of long wooden poles (thin trees) bridging the space between the sod walls, hundreds of additional bricks might be needed to complete the structure (McLeod, 1977).

However, before the walls were commenced or room partitions planned, McLeod (1977) noted that a cellar for the preservation of food had to be dug. Her family used a seven foot wide by ten foot long design for their storage space. The cellar had to be dug deep enough under the house to be partly below the freezing depth of the soil so that the warmth of the ground and whatever heat filtered through the trap-door to the cellar would prevent the temperature from dropping to the freezing point and spoiling the stored produce (McLeod, 1977).[95]

As such, building a soddie required that tons of sod be gathered, hauled to the building site and stacked to a height above the heads of the settlers, and that thousands of pounds of soil be dug out of the cellar area and hauled away. The individual tasks were arduous and even with the assistance of every family member capable of helping in some way, the construction of a home was clearly a difficult job that would absorb a great deal of labour power. In most cases, only the strongest children could be called upon to stack sod or dig cellars but younger boys and girls could cut the blocks to size. While most families did not prevail on their children to assist with the more strenuous aspects of construction work, the Smith family was, to a degree, an exception to the rule. Kathleen Smith (u.d.. p. 6) indicated that every member of her family, including her six siblings, all under eleven years of age, helped to dig a "small cellar, about eight by eight by and six feet deep" under their home. They then helped to lay the lower layers of sod bricks to make walls and later, her father and a younger brother drove a wagon to a nearby valley and cut "two big loads of poplar poles" to use as rafters for the sod roof (Smith, u.d., p. 6). The children also helped to peel the bark off the poles and sort out the straight shafts to be utilized in the building.

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[94] The number of sod bricks is calculated as ninety-six bricks per layer, multiplied by three stacked layers per foot of height of the wall, multiplied by an eight foot height of the wall (96 x 3 x 8= 2,304).

[95] In building a cellar, two aspects were vital. Firstly, the cellar had to deep enough that it would not be affected by the freezing of the soil during winter. Secondly, the cellar had to remain dry and in the absence of a naturally draining sandy soil, a drainage system had to be considered while the cellar was under construction. A trench two feet deeper than the cellar had to be dug around the cellar and filled with gravel. This trench then had to be extended to a spot away and downhill from the house so that water would drain away through the gravel rather than collect in the less porous cellar itself (Anonymous, 1908, p. 43).

A more popular task for children who helped with the construction process (that even the smallest children could perform) was 'finishing' the walls by chinking the inevitable cracks.[96] For example, Mildred Hyndman (1979) talked about the process of building with sod in her memoir of life on a homestead near Morse, Saskatchewan. Her family had arrived at the farm in 1910 and in their first year, put up several buildings. Although she was only ten and her brother was just turning seven, they were called on to assist with the work but she indicated that it "was fun to us, chinking the cracks with mud, and watching the walls get higher every day" (Hyndman, 1979, p. 2). Further, as small hands were able to fit into tighter spots, children might actually perform the finishing tasks more efficiently than adults.

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[96] Building with sod, logs or other materials often left cracks or gaps where wind, rain and snow could enter the interior. 'Chinking' the walls' by filling the cracks with moss or grass and then

Children could also help with decorating the interior once construction was complete, as a mud layer to seal the interior walls was needed. In Evelyn McLeod's case (1977), her mother put cheesecloth and wallpaper over the mud to complete the illusion that the house was made with flat walls rather than layers of sod. The children helped her with this lighter labour as it called more for patience and skill rather than muscular strength. The family of Sue Harrigan (1980) took a similar approach to finishing their home. All family members chinked the walls of the soddie so that future leaks would not occur and maintenance work could be avoided. Mud was pressed into crevices on both the exterior and interior of their house to seal leaks but they went on to improve the arrangement even further. After smoothing the interior walls with a mud plaster, cotton cloth was pasted to the mud and wallpaper was then glued over the cotton to complete the sealing of the structure. (The extra precautions must have worked as no report of maintenance work for the walls appeared in Sue's memoir).

For those with access to the necessary materials, it was possible to enhance the interior of the soddie to a higher level than had been achieved by either the McLeod or the Harrigan families. This finishing technique was reported by

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sealing the repair with mud solved the problem and the children of the family were often assigned this task as it was relatively safe and easy work.

Kathleen Smith (u.d.) whose family had access to a white mud clay found in a local coulee near their homestead in the Weyburn, Saskatchewan area. Her mother was from a poor farming family in Ireland that had also been required to make the most of their farm's resources to support their lifestyle and thus, was aware that suitably prepared clay could be used as wall plaster. If properly applied, the clay coating would give the rough sod walls a professionally finished look. However, this experiment in decorating took a great deal of effort on the part of Kathleen, her siblings, and their mother. Clay had to be excavated and moved to the farmyard, a trench had to be dug near the house to use as a mixing tub for the clay slurry, and water had to be hauled in barrels from a nearby lake to mix with the raw clay. Before it could be applied to create a flat finished surface, the clay had to be smooth and soft and this could only be achieved if the water and clay in the trench were stirred constantly, a tiring job for children, and one that required both muscle and endurance.

Inside the house, hatchets were used to smooth out bumps in the walls and once all of the preparation was complete, the clay had to be pressed onto the walls to seal the dirt and form a flat surface. Kathleen noted that the clay "did not stick by just trying to put it on with a trowel, so [they] all helped by throwing it against the sod and then it was evened out with a board covered with a piece of carpet dipped in water" (Smith, u.d., p. 6). The clay cracked as it dried but by monitoring the walls closely, the children were able to locate and fill the cracks and then smooth the repaired section until a stable surface was finished. At that point a thin paste of clay was made and used to 'paint' the walls in a final concealing coat with the result being flat, white, washable walls that appeared to be made of plaster. The contrast with the previous un-cleanable mud and grass walls presumably boosted morale and thus made the expenditure of labour worthwhile.

Other ideas for improving sod houses included using blankets as room dividers, newspapers as wallpaper to hide the dirt, and rough cut trees for flooring to keep the family's feet out of the dirt, all of which ideas consumed either labour power or its equivalent, money. Emptied flour sacks could also make the home more livable if they were bleached to remove the writing, dipped in paraffin wax to make them waterproof and then fastened into place as windows by someone with enough time and energy remaining to work on 'frills' (Kennedy, 1970). A person could not see out of these types of windows, but some light would enter the house and improve the ambiance. Thus, sod houses could be made somewhat more comfortable to live in but only if sufficient labour were employed for that purpose.

While soddies were essentially cost free and could be built even by those with little knowledge of construction techniques, they remained a continuous draw on the family's labour power after construction was completed. 'Beautification' programs for the interiors would improve morale but simply maintaining the houses also took time away from other needs. For example, water and wind erosion of the exterior would have to be repaired to keep the dwelling secure and to avoid weakening the walls.

In addition to regular maintenance, unexpected problems such as damage caused by animals or pests could arise and lead to an immediate need for reallocation of labour resources. For example, the experience of the Hillson family of Drinkwater, Saskatchewan is instructive. The family had built a hybrid soddie dug partially into the side of a hill.[97] Sod walls were built out from the hill to expand the living space and a sod roof supported by wooden posts extended from the hill to the front wall of the home. The difficulty with the soddie design was that the Hillsons had not provided for any form of divider or fence on the hillside to keep animals from walking onto the sod roof. The defect was discovered by a cow walking on the hill. When it crossed onto the sod roof, the thin poplar trees supporting the sod were not strong enough to hold the weight of the animal and the cow fell through into the bedroom. The hole in the roof and the damage to the home had to be repaired quickly, forcing the family to expend valuable labour on repairing the damage and making the new roof secure from other unexpected visitors (Taggart, 1958).

Aside from the occasional large animal that might cause damage, the homesteaders also had to remain aware that while the building material for their homes was free of charge, it had been taken from what had been, up to the moment of severance, a complex interdependent grassland ecosystem filled with life. Just as the sod that was used on the roofs of the soddies did not die,[98] so too would the insects and animals of the sod continue to live. This became evident to Gladys Kennedy when a weakened section of sod fell into the house while she was caring for her sick grandmother. This piece of the roof, along with the family of new-born mice living in the sod, fell onto her grandmother's bed but rather than panicking, the ever practical Gladys noted that as one of her other duties was to protect the house from pests, the broken roof saved her some work as it was easy to catch the baby mice. She "soon did away with the little things… [and this] saved catching them in traps later to keep them out of… [the] food" (Kennedy, 1970, pp. 1, 5, 6). Of course, the time Gladys saved on pest control would have been lost to the labour required to repair the depredations of their resident mice.

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[97] A similar technique was utilized by the Miles family who settled near Innisfree, Alberta in 1904. The house used a natural knoll as its rear wall but relied on log walls for the remaining three sides. It was extremely small, particularly once the family furniture (or as much as would fit) was brought indoors. Movement was restricted so that movement from one end of the house to the other required a "careful winding around what was in the middle of the room" (1905, p. 2).

Mice were not the only prairie creatures to find the sod a comfortable place to take up residence. For example, Kathleen Smith (u.d.), reported that garter snakes crawled onto the walls of her family's home but they were lucky in that the reptiles appeared to enjoy sleeping in the cracks between layers of sod but did not get into the house at all. As the snakes were harmless and ate other pests, no harm was done and no extra work was created. However, the story told by Viola Cameron (1975) was quite different. Viola (an orphan from the United States being raised by her maternal grandmother) was under five years old when brought to Canada in 1908 to live on her grandmother's homestead near Bandfurley,

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[98] According to Kennedy (1970), the grass continued to live after being severed from the soil. In fact the grass had to be mowed during the summer so that the sparks from the stovepipe would not

Alberta.[99] They became established in a sod house next to a Russian settler who had the misfortune of possessing a sod roof on his house. In the winter, the warmth attracted garter snakes to nest in the roof and unfortunately, "it wasn't unusual for a garter snake to stick its head down. I guess looking for food or something" (Cameron, 1975, p. 3). The neighbor would then 'blast' the snake with either his .22 rifle or a shotgun, depending on which was closer at hand.

Family labour was also called upon to limit or repair the damage caused to the home by rain, particularly in terms of keeping the roof in a decent state of repair. However, rainwater would eventually leak through thatch or sod roofs to drip into the interior no matter what or how many precautions were taken or how much labour was devoted to seeing that this did not happen. Leaks were inevitable as sod, even if laid in multiple layers, was not waterproof. The water would thus soak the sod and then trickle through once it could hold no additional moisture. As such, a roof could protect settlers from limited rainfall but if enough rain fell to saturate the sod, the drips would begin and last until the excess water worked its way through to the interior. Isabel and Betty McNaught described the protection that sod roofs provided from the rain by indicating that a "flat sod roof doesn't shed any rain, it just starts a little later and lasts longer" (1976, p. 10). In other words, a two-day rain outside might leak through and continue for three days inside.

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set dry roof grasses on fire.

Gladys Kennedy made a similar point in her story of the mud and straw roof on her grandmother's home on the family homestead near Mannville, Alberta. She noted that "when it rained hard the roof leaked and dripped for a day or two after, so we had to put buckets etc., to catch the drips, even had to move the beds sometimes" (Kennedy, 1970, p. 5).[100] The same point was made by Harriette Parkinson who indicated that she slept with her parents in the one corner of the house that stayed dry in a storm. Her mother tried wallpapering the ceiling to solve the problem but water accumulated on the paper and created a bulge hanging from the roof. As "a helpful nine-year-old", Harriette poked the bulge with a fork to drain the water but it poured through tearing the paper and ending that experiment (Parkinson, 1979, p. 1).

The inability to build a roof that would remain watertight wasted a great deal of labour power for maintenance, repairing water damage, and in setting out and emptying drip pots when the rain leaked through despite the work done to prevent this. However, given the lack of resources available to the settlers, there was little choice but to live with the situation and expend the necessary labour.

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[99] It was interesting to note that Viola's grandmother, as the head of their small household and being fifty-four years old, qualified to acquire a free homestead parcel in her own right under the Dominion Lands Act (1872).

[100] Even adopting different designs for the roofs did not always work as shown by the experience of Elmer Spackman. Elmer wrote of the house that he and his family lived in after immigrating to Stirling, Alberta from Utah in 1902 when he was just a boy. Even though the house had a roof made of sawn planks (the bottom layer was laid in place with its bark side down while an overlapping layer was placed on top with its bark side up to shed water), the rain poured through. Spackman (1975, p. 6) noted that "whenever we had a rain storm it rained in the house as well… [and we had to] put pans all over the beds and all over the house" to protect the interior.

There was no means of consistently building leak-proof roofs given the materials and technology of the time.

Of course, the inconvenience and extra work for Gladys and Harriette were quite minor compared to the experience of Delia Crawford (1976) after her family migrated to a homestead near Athabasca, Alberta in 1912. Nothing could have prepared them for the deluge of water drips that came through their sod roof after fifty-two straight days of rain. Confinement inside the small house was claustrophobic and the constant dampness, the sound of water splashing inside the house and irregular sleeping arrangements were devastating to family health and morale. As Delia described the situation:

> it was raining inside as well as outside. Oh that was really something. The only dry place there was was over the one bed, the rest of us we all slept on the floor… It was hard times. I remember mom took the oilcloth off the big table we had and put it over, nailed it to the roof like. And that's the only place it was kind of halfways dry in there. The rest of it was soaking wet (Crawford, 1976, p. 2-3).[101]

Because of the damage done by wildlife, decay and the rain, sod roofs had to be replaced every two years at most if serious seepage was to be avoided.[102]

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[101] Laura Matz (1978, p. 1) and her family adopted a different approach to the problem of water dripping through their sod roof. Rather than take the oilcloth off the table and nail it to the roof, they "slept under the long table because it was always dry there" thanks to the oilcloth cover.

[102] An alternative to the sod roof was recommended in a 'self-help' column in a 1902 edition of The Nor'West Farmer (Major, p. 139). A product referred to as "Mica Roofing" was sold in hardware stores in three foot wide rolls for $3 per 100 square feet. This product, once installed over 1" by 4" support boards with overlapping edges, was said to be both water and fire proof (a combination of felt cloth, ground mica rock and tar forming the primary ingredients of this wonder product).

However, if necessary repairs were performed on a regular basis, the houses could last many years as Mabel Hawthorne's family proved by living in their original soddie for fourteen years after entering their homestead near Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. Aside from the regular work that it took to maintain the house, Mabel enjoyed living as a settler in a soddie. She noted in her memoir that the thick walls made it quite warm in the winter, cool in the summer and quiet as it blocked out the sound of the wind and prairie thunderstorms that she hated (Hawthorne, u.d.).

Sod was such a versatile building material that in addition to homes, it was also used in the construction of buildings such as barns. For example, in her diaries, Nellie Hislop (Nuffield, 1987) indicated that when her father decided to build a barn from sod to save money on lumber, the children were set to hauling the sod pieces plowed up by their father earlier in the day. As described by Nellie:

> We lifted the sod piece by piece, onto lengths of sacking and dragged it to the building site. Johnnie [her brother] began cutting the pieces of sod into blocks of regular width, and when he had a supply, he showed us how to lay them along the line of poles, packing them carefully to make an air-tight wall. It was much like building a play fort out of blocks of snow, except the sods were considerably heavier (Nuffield, 1987, p. 58).

Of course, the children were unable to build the walls too high but they did help as much as they were able to. Even Nellie's father was stymied for a time as

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However, this precursor of the modern asphalt shingle cost money, a commodity in generally short he could not lift the sod high enough to finish the barn but by hiring two brothers from the neighboring farm, he was able to complete the barn and move on with other projects. Sheds for equipment and shelters for livestock were also built with sod, as was a 'cool room' for processing milk, cream, butter and cheese. The labour of all of the members of the Hislop family went into building these structures but the one thing they could not build of sod was a pigpen. They discovered that pigs would either rip through a sod wall or burrow under it to escape confinement. As such, "a trip to the Big Bush, eight miles east, to fetch a load of logs became necessary. The logs were cut into six foot lengths, then sharpened on one end, and driven into the ground" to make a fence that would hold the pigs (Nuffield, 1987, p. 59).[103]

An additional use for sod as a building material was revealed by an enterprising young English immigrant named James Minifie in 1909. He was disappointed that he had not been able to assist with building a soddie as his father had decided to build the family home with lumber. However, he did find a way to follow in the path of the earlier settlers. In his words, "the romantic urge to build was strong enough to set me to erecting a sod house for my dog, from turf turned over in the garden. I shared the kennel and fleas with Tim, the inevitable farm

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supply among settlers and unlike sod or straw, was not immediately available for use.

[103] This same knowledge of the burrowing and destructive habits of pigs was also known by the Minifie family but they were not as efficient in their construction techniques. Rather than making a solid wall with its foundation driven into the ground, they attempted to use fence posts with nailed boards as their defense against their pigs running free. "By tea-time, they [the pigs] were galloping happily about the prairie" and the boys' next task to aid in creating the farm was to track down their

collie, happily enough" but after a few days of living in the dog house, he came to better appreciate the wooden house his father had built (Minifie, 1972, p. 61).[104]

Unlike many families that homesteaded in the central Alberta area, the DeVore family were able to build a log house on their homestead but it was due more to luck than careful planning. The family had lived in southern Oregon in the United States (an area that had been settled for approximately fifty years and had access to large supplies of wood) and thus did not like the idea of improvising a home out of sod cut from the unbroken prairie, or a hole dug into the side of a hill. As such, Roy DeVore's father was determined to find a suitable parcel of land with sufficient trees for their needs. The family spent a year in Calgary and during this period, Roy's father took the train to Innisfail twice and walked the land west of the town trying to find an appropriate farming location. He finally gave up the search when he could no longer stand the flies, mosquitoes, dust and heat of the long walk into the unclaimed lands and settled for a poor piece of hilly property covered in poplar and willow trees. The land had minimal topsoil lying over a thick layer of clay and "boasted seven sloughs" (DeVore, 1970, p. 27).

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future market products and return them to the pen that they would immediately reinforce (Minifie, 1972, p. 101).

[104] Other experiments with unique building materials and/or techniques were also reported by farm children in their stories of life on the frontier. Elmer Spackman (1975), for example, used his ingenuity to handle the task of building a chicken coop without the wood necessary to construct the usual wooden shed. His solution was to build the coop like a root cellar in the side of a coulee near the family home. The chickens were protected from adverse weather by roofing the hole with boards left over from construction of a barn, piling on a layer of straw for warmth and covering this with dirt to weigh the roof down.

When the time came to move to the homestead and build a home, only the father and fourteen-year-old Roy went ahead while the rest of the family waited in Calgary. Luckily, the homestead had access to many spruce trees which were relatively straight, and of similar circumference and height. The father also arranged for a supply of cut lumber to be prepared at a local saw mill for use as flooring, doorframes and gables in the new house. They cut and hauled enough trees to the building site for a log cabin sixteen feet wide by twenty-six feet long.

Unfortunately for Roy and his father, they had begun construction on the homestead late in the fall of 1906. As such, they had to continue their construction work during what was recorded as the worst winter in prairie history. In fact, Roy's memoir referred to that first winter on the prairies as "THE winter" (DeVore, 1970, p. 33).[105] He recalled that the winter was like no other in his memory. Bitterly cold (reaching 65 below zero Fahrenheit) temperatures made the three-person construction crew "dance to keep our ill-clad feet from freezing, beat our mittened hands together to maintain circulation, and… rub bridle-bits with bared hands ere putting them in the oxen's mouths lest they stick to tongues, taking the skin off" (DeVore, 1970, p. 33).

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[105] Stories about 'THE winter' were researched by Jones (1987, p. 46) who referred to the period as the "season of execution". He reported that two snowfalls, each followed by a brief warm spell that melted a layer of snow and created an ice crust, were followed by January temperatures plunging to minus 30 Fahrenheit with constant winds. Cattle, their food buried and pressed by the winds, drifted toward the rivers for water but "left a trail of blood, their legs slashed to shreds by the sharp ice crusts". Thousands of animals, half the herds on the prairies, froze or drowned when the weight of animals seeking water broke the ice cover on rivers and streams and the smell of rotting carcasses hung over the region for months once the weather broke that spring.

Despite the cold that froze the combs off the roosters, the feet off the chickens and the ears off the cats and calves, they worked outdoors in the dangerous conditions and did not finish the final 'chinking' (filling in the spaces between the logs making up the walls) with swamp moss until January 15, 1907. A more thorough job of filling the cracks was done in the spring when it became possible to dig up mud and clay to prepare plaster for spreading between the individual logs. As Roy noted, "[we endured] hardship, sheer privation, and exhausting dawn to dusk labour that left us aged in middle-life" (DeVore, 1970, p. 34).[106]

Boys, of course, were not the only children to take part in the construction of buildings on the pioneer farms. For example, Mary Hiemstra (1997) entered Canada in 1903 as a six year old whose family was part of the group of English 'Barr Colonists' being led to settle the Lloydminster area on the present Alberta and Saskatchewan border. The area boasted many trees and the family decided that a log house would be most appropriate for their needs. Despite an argument about the size of the proposed home, the height of the available poplar trees ultimately set the limits on the length and width that was possible in the area and Mary and her father headed into the bush to find, cut, trim and haul the needed logs back to the home site. In her memoirs, Mary noted that it was not easy to find even two or three trees out of an entire grove that were straight and long enough to serve in the construction of their home.

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[106] It is also interesting to note that the DeVores spent this first winter in a tent while they were working on the construction of their home.

> To see if a tree would do Dad stood at the foot and squinted up at it from all sides. If it suited, he chopped it down, lopped off the branches and the top, hitched Nelly [their horse] to one end of it, and dragged it out of the bush (Hiemstra, 1997, p. 159).

Working to collect eight to ten suitable logs at a time, the wagon would be brought around once the necessary number were available. Lifting heavy logs onto a wagon was difficult labour[107] and far beyond the capacities of a six year old and Mary wrote that her father "did the loading, but I kept him company and thought I helped" (Hiemstra, 1997, p. 159). She did have to tolerate the heat, dust, scratches from rose thorns and twigs, bruises from falling over roots and the jolting ride back and forth to the trees in an unsprung wagon with rock hard seats. In fact the ride was so bumpy that Mary had to sit at the back behind the wheels as, if she was thrown from the wagon by a bump, she would not be run over before the horse could be stopped.

The building process, once the logs were on site, was also arduous as Mary indicated that the:

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[107] For most families, the process of obtaining logs was a dangerous process; however, luck could play a role for some families as was made evident by Leddie Wilson. She indicated that a heavy rain storm hit the area in which they were homesteading. The amount of rain was so high that the Red Deer River rose into flood stage and undercut hundreds, possibly thousands, of trees that then floated downstream past their farm. The male members of her family "were all wading up to their

> logs that had looked straight when they were growing in the groves all curved one way or another when cut down, and they had to be turned this way and that so that the walls would be as even as possible, then the logs had to be notched and fitted to one another. When the walls were low the fitting and turning wasn't too hard, but the higher the walls grew the harder the fitting got (Hiemstra, 1997, p. 161).

Despite the problems, the weight of the logs and the difficulty in lifting the highest logs to the top of the wall, the family overcame the obstacles together. One final service that Mary performed in the building of her future home was to help her father with notching the logs so that they would lock together rather than falling apart. The logs would, unless anchored in some fashion, roll away from the wall or shift position so that the bends and curves in the log no longer matched the log beneath it. Mary and her father solved this problem by sitting on opposite ends of the logs to brace them as her father chopped the notches. The work was not perfect but by tolerating the strain of sitting on a slipping log while the shock of each axe blow was transmitted through the log and into her legs, arms and back, the child contributed to the construction of her future home.

As a result of the social conventions of the time, Mary's mother was unable to help with the construction process to any great degree. She was caring for Mary's young brother and although they sometimes switched jobs so that Mary could rest while playing with the baby, she could not wear pants and thus could not

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tummys in the water" and managed to catch 64 trees and haul them to shore, enough to "build a stable, bunk room and an addition to the house" (Wilson, 1902, p. 1).

straddle the logs to balance them.[108] Sitting 'sidesaddle' did not help as she could not grip the logs with her legs to stop them from shifting under her and thus, Mary helped most often. Despite the battering she took, Mary wrote that she was never hurt and that "helping with the house made [her] feel very big and important" (Hiemstra, 1997, p. 160). Of course, not all children could carry so much of the labour load within their families. Molly Sanford, for example, was only capable of helping her father to roof their newly built home yet when the job was complete, she still had a sense of accomplishment over what she had done and stated with pride that "it seems I can put my hand to almost anything" (Stansell, 1976, p. 95).

Amelia Smith (1975) was another young girl who sought to help with the work load of establishing her family's new homestead near Fort MacLeod, Alberta. Her father handled all of the heaviest labour needs which included constructing a house, stable and fence[109] using materials that had to be hauled across twenty miles of prairie. Living in a tent for the first month while building proceeded was exciting for Amelia but once the roof boards were on the house, she added her efforts to the process and assisted her father in shingling the roof. As she described the scenario:

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[108] In the early 1900s, it was not considered proper for a woman to wear men's clothing (pants). Skirts were the respectable form of dress for a lady even though they limited the types of activity a woman could pursue.

[109] The labour involved in fence construction was not as heavy as in other tasks and as such, children could readily be called upon to assist in the process. As disclosed in Nellie Hislop's (Nuffield, 1987) memoir, her brother Johnnie's turn to assist in the building of a fence came when he was thirteen years old. Their father would spend a day chopping down trees in a wooded area approximately eight miles from their homestead near Prairie Grove, Manitoba and the next day, he and Johnnie would sharpen the posts with an axe. Fixing the posts on the line would begin on the third day, the father and son using a three-step technique to seat the posts in place. In the first step, a one-foot deep hole would be dug at the appropriate spot, and secondly, water would be poured into the hole to "soak and soften the dry, hard soil" and prepare it for the third step. The third step occurred once the water had turned the dirt to mud. This involved their father driving the post into the hole with an axe while Johnnie held it in place, both of them getting splattered with mud every time the post drove a little deeper. Wire would then be stretched tightly between posts and nailed securely in place. Bertha Myer (u.d.), the only girl to indicate that she had worked on building fences, told of the day her father required assistance with the stringing of a wire fence and she was the only one available. She drove the horses pulling the wagon loaded with wire along the fence line as close as possible to the posts themselves to ensure a tight fit for the wire and was amazed

> I lay the shingles for my father and he nailed them you see. I remember being so careful not to have one crack over another crack. I enjoyed doing that, I thought it was wonderful. We just moved into the house… and the next day the tent was blown down (Smith, 1975, p. 4).

The luck of completing their move before anyone was hurt by a storm and the feeling of accomplishment for Amelia were both positive outcomes of encouraging children to contribute to handling the work load on the frontier.

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that she could have done so without running over any posts or tangling the wire. She was only seven years old at the time.

As an alternative to wire fencing with its need for purchased wire and expensive nails to secure the wire to the posts, Norman Stewart (1962) described a fence that he and his brothers built without the need to purchase any hardware. The construction process began with locating and felling relatively straight poplar trees at least fourteen feet in height and two to four inches in circumference. It could take weeks to gather enough logs but once stripped of branches and cut to the appropriate length, these fence rails could be stockpiled near the construction location until needed. Willow trees were similarly gathered and sharpened for use as pickets or posts to support the rails while skinny but long willow branches, still green and with sap, were collected for use as "withes" or ties to secure the rails onto the pickets.

While the materials were different, the building system used to set the pickets was identical to that described above in reference to Johnnie Hislop. A hole was started using one of the pickets and water was then poured in to soften the ground at that location. This process was repeated until the picket was pushed sixteen inches into the ground without hammering. Two pickets were set side by side to act as guides for the rails and the rails themselves were then put into place, secured using the willow branch 'withes' to the height needed for the animal to be confined or kept out of the area (Stewart, 1962).

In her memoirs dealing with her life as an immigrant on a farm near Dauphin, Manitoba in 1897, Anna Farion[110] also revealed taking part in constructing the family's first home. Her father was a carpenter by trade and he felled the trees and squared off the logs using an axe while Anna, her mother and several smaller children hauled the logs to the construction site at the top of a hill. This exercise was conducted using muscle power alone as no animals were available to be hitched to drag lines and was thus exhausting for both the children and their mother. Once enough logs were gathered, the walls were built by laying the trees in opposite directions to reduce the degree of unevenness caused by the fact that the trees were thicker at the base than the top. Anna and her sisters were too small to assist in the construction and her efforts may thus not have been as extensive as those of Mary Hiemstra, but she and the rest of her siblings did assist in the construction of their own home. Hauling logs was not skilled work but it was necessary and Anna noted proudly that "the palms of our hands were covered with calluses" by the time they were done (1978, p. 87).

The sod and log houses referred to above were not the only design in use on the prairies as settlers made do with whatever resource they could locate. As mentioned earlier, reliable sources of trees were not easy to find in the drier southern zone although some homesteaders did live in the river valleys and could access suitable trees at will. Others had to be more innovative. For example,

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[110] Anna Farion was of Ukrainian descent. (While this dissertation deals with primarily Anglo-individuals, her story was included as it provided another example of children working on the

Aquina Anderson's (u.d.) family moved to Wood Mountain, Saskatchewan from South Dakota in 1911. They found that they had access to large deposits of clay on their homestead, but not to the thick sod that made soddies possible. As such, they adopted the construction techniques used in the south-western United States and built an adobe house using a mix of clay and straw as wall material.

To make this type of house (referred to as a 'Doby'), Aquina's father and a friend spent several days cutting slim poplars and fine willow trees to use as frames on the new house and additional days peeling off the bark to obtain a solid surface. "The poplars were nailed horizontally to upright poles and were hewn to give them a flat surface, after which the fine willows were nailed diagonally across the face of the walls, both inside and out" (Anderson, u.d., p. 3). Once the frame was in place, clay, water and hay were mixed into a thick mud in a wagon until it was the proper consistency to be applied to the walls. At that point, the rest of the family members were able to help spread the clay mixture over both the interior and exterior surfaces of the wooden frame to provide a double layer of protection on the walls. The clay dried to form a hard waterproof wall and the hay filler helped to prevent cracking. In the case of the Andersons, the house was completed using boards purchased in Moose Jaw for the floor and roof given the lack of other suitable materials.

Other experimenters adopted hay as a construction basic even though it was also valuable as fodder for the livestock that the family possessed. For example,

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family home).

Charles Philips (1967) was twelve years old when his family migrated to the area of Stettler, Alberta in 1908. In their first year, Charles and his father harvested hay for their livestock but as they had no storage buildings, they built a pole structure at the homestead and then stacked the hay around the poles. The hay acted like walls and Charles referred to their creation as a 'hay barn'. Christen Christensen also mentioned hay barns in his description of homesteading as a young man of sixteen. He and his brother were placed in charge of setting up the homestead when his father was crippled by rheumatism while working on a house during their first winter (1903) on the prairies. The boys slept in the one room shanty that they had built while their father and mother had a bedroom in the hay barn. Unfortunately, the barn was constantly cold and their mother "had to have mitts on to make the bed in winter…[as] the cows kept eating through the hay walls" (Christensen, 1976, p. 11).

3) Summary

Based on the information set out above, creating a farm in the prairie wilderness was a difficult labour-intensive task. Starting with bare land, often times unseen before moving onto the property, settlers had to work on several priority tasks immediately upon arrival. As such, there was a great deal of work to be done, but the only asset the settler had to apply to these tasks was his own labour. As such, children had an important place in the family work structure.

While this Chapter deals with child labour directed at construction projects prior to the beginning of productive operations, some child labour was expended on these initial tasks even though much of the work was dangerous and required heavy physical labour. For example felling trees, stacking logs and hauling sod bricks to form walls would be overwhelming tasks for those too young to have developed the necessary muscle and mass to handle such work. Even so, a few diaries and memoirs indicated that children did assist with such labour, and both girls and younger children were among those involved in the work. Most children reported taking part in lighter work such as chinking gaps in the structure to make them weather-tight and applying finishing mud or clay to the walls to make them more attractive, but those who did work on the harder tasks did not appear to resent their fate or dislike the labour. In fact, many of the children indicated that they were quite proud of their accomplishments.

Overall, farming children were clearly seen, with social approval, as workers on family farms. Most settlers could have accomplished their tasks without child labour but the key point to be made is that for those family farms with child labour available, the work could be distributed and as such, the capacity to move the family's fortunes forward existed if they wished to use it.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE ROLE OF CHILDREN'S LABOUR IN OPERATING THE FARM: PRODUCTIVE LABOUR

The purpose of this Chapter is to discuss the use made of child labour in the ongoing operations of family farms. In particular, attention is focused on involvement in activities directed at generating money for the family through the production of marketable foodstuffs.[111] As such, section one of this Chapter reviews the use of child labour in the agricultural production cycle. This cycle of clearing fields of brush and rocks, breaking the sod, plowing, harrowing, seeding and harvesting crops would repeat each year until all of the arable land was in production. While the work was a physical challenge, children, primarily boys, were involved with this labour-intensive program and performed most of the tasks required to produce the marketable grain crop.

Section two deals with a second source of market earnings - the sale of livestock and poultry. Raising livestock and poultry was also a labour-intensive operation but it was unlikely that caring for cattle, pigs, sheep and chickens, handling stable chores, milking cows, making butter and gathering eggs for the commercial market would have required the same degree of sheer physical strength as would have been needed to haul rocks and destroy root systems. Given the nature of the products, the sale of butter, milk, cream, or chickens could have occurred on a year round basis and thus produced a steady inflow of cash but for larger stock, sales would have followed the cycle of birth and growth of the animals. Even so, the animals and poultry on hand from time to time would have required fairly constant care and as such, there were many tasks for children (both boys and girls) to perform.

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[111] As set out in Table K of Appendix 2, participation in productive labour drew the largest total number of children of any labour category with 87 boys and 39 girls working to enhance the cash value of the farming enterprise. The labour of these children was divided between the various tasks although as shown by Tables C and D of Appendix 2, both girls and boys participated in field work, clearing fields of rocks, trees and brush, and transporting harvested crops to market. However, the level of participation was quite different as far more boys were active in each type of task. For example, a total of 76 boys noted handling field work of some type, 15 reported their efforts in clearing fields and 9 had taken part in crop transportation as compared to 7, 5, and 1 girls respectively. Similar figures, although not quite as heavily weighted toward boys, are seen in

Section three completes the Chapter with a summary of the findings and includes an analysis of the possibility that children's productive labour was organized under a gender-based division of responsibilities. As with the construction tasks discussed in Chapter Four, children apparently worked actively in assisting the adults with the labour necessary to maintain and expand the family farm's monetary reserves and its output of marketable produce. The involvement of children in almost every phase of production once again indicates that they were active participants in the ongoing operation of the family farm.

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association with livestock production (a total of 62 boys of all ages as compared to 29 girls), work with horses (25 boys and 18 girls) and the performance of stable chores (4 boys and 1 girl).

1) Fieldwork[112]

Despite government advertising brochures that suggested it was possible to simply "scratch the rich virgin soil to ensure good results" (Eager, 1953, p. 2), the pioneers soon found that large amounts of heavy physical labour had to be expended in the preparation of their land for seeding. The brochures were accurate to a degree as the soil was extremely rich in nutrients after thousands of years of natural development but they did not specify that 'scratching' the soil would take a great deal of slow back-breaking effort, particularly when dealing with thick vegetation growth. Depending upon the geography of the site and the extent of tree coverage, settlers would have to remove trees and destroy the roots so that cultivation could start the following year. Roy DeVore, for instance, reported that his family cleared and broke new land on a continual basis in the first year. By their second year on their Alberta homestead, they began work on a portion of their property in a river valley that was:

> covered with brush and timber and had to be literally hewed out. Land had to be 'grubbed' before it could be plowed; fence posts had to be cut, hauled, sharpened and driven before the land could be enclosed. Sloughs had to be corduroyed with

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[112] In terms of fieldwork, neither boys or girls participated extensively in the process until the age of 9. Tables C and D in Appendix 2 indicate that only 3 boys younger than this reported performing field work, 1 noted clearing fields, and none had transported crops. This compared to only a single girl in the 6 to 8 year old age group who worked at the job of clearing fields for planting. The data in Tables C and D also suggest that participation, for both boys and girls, increased as age rose. For 9 to 11 year old boys, for example, 25 of 40 boys in the age group or 62.5% performed field work of some variety but this increased to 71.7% (38 of 53) for 12 to 14 year olds. The increase is not as obvious for other crop production activities such as clearing fields and transporting crops to market. With respect to the girls, so few were involved with crops that a meaningful age effect could not be calculated.

> timber before being crossed and wells must need be dug since there was no money to pay well drillers (Devore, 1970, p. 40).

Clearly, the process of breaking the sod was not as simple as unloading a plow from the settler's wagon and getting started with the work. As indicated by another pioneer, Mr. S. G. Hickley of Nipawin, Saskatchewan, the process of clearing was time consuming as he was only able to break thirteen acres of land over two years, rather than the twenty acres mandated by the Dominion Lands Act (1872) (Turner, 1955). The problems that he faced were similar to those that had plagued DeVore, that is, the need to remove the brush and destroy the offending roots with an axe.[113]

Given the nature of this work, few children were strong enough to assist in this preliminary process.[114] However, for those who did work in the fields, such as a fifteen year old boy from Wellwood, Manitoba who wrote under the pseudonym 'A Roxburghshire Lad' (August, 1902), they were fulfilling several important functions when assisting with the clearing work. As the 'Lad' noted, he was involved with all phases of the clearing and land preparation process from chopping down small poplar trees, digging out oak trees (of which he felt there were many in Manitoba!) sawing the wood, and breaking the sod (one hundred and seventy acres in total). Once broken, he stated that the desiccated sod had to be plowed, disked or harrowed to break up large clumps of dirt before the planting process could begin.

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[113] A young anonymous female contributor to Barry Broadfoot's book, The Pioneer Years (1976, p. 45), commented on her parent's homestead near Edmonton, Alberta that was covered with bush. As she stated:

> Bush. That's what we called it then but bush today means little trees and willows. [But] I mean big trees. Pine tress and cottonwoods, poplars, every kind of tree seemed to grow on that homestead up in the bush, and they weren't small. A man is five foot eight, right? An axe is three feet long. A day is as long as you want it to last but say, say 10 hours. And do you know how big 160 acres is? And then look at those trees. Some were only six inches through but lots, many, many many were a foot through.

This anonymous writer also indicated that even if a person worked every day, all day regardless of the weather, they would be lucky if they were able to clear 2 acres of land per year.

[114] Maria Adamowska (1978, pp. 60-61) recounts the story of her mother and herself when she was a small child in the early 1900s on their homestead near Yorkton, Saskatchewan. They were left to clear their fully treed land while her father worked off-farm. She stated that:

> Mother and I began to clear our land. But since I was hardly strong enough for the job, I helped by grabbing hold of the top of each bush and pulling on it while mother cut the roots with the ax. Next we dug the ground with spades. How well did I do? At best, I had barely enough strength to thrust half the depth of the blade into the ground, no deeper.....[The] two of us cleared and dug close to four acres of land.

Even in those areas where only short or long prairie grasses grew, the breaking process was not automatic. Simply using the breaking plow to turn the sod so that the roots would be exposed to air and light and begin to decompose was not feasible if rocks[115] were hidden in the grass. Such rocks could break or dull the cutting blade and thus had to be removed before the plow could cut its first furrow, adding to the amount of labour required to start production (Turner, 1955). For example, children such as Alfred Jones (1902), a 13-year-old boy living near Eden, Manitoba, were called upon to use their labour in clearing fields of

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(As this dissertation is focusing on Anglo individuals, Maria Adamowska is outside of the study group, however her story does provide an interesting example of work in the fields.)

[115] Turner (1955, p. 45) relates the story of Mr. H. R. Carson of Bladworth Saskatchewan who "spent as much time digging stones with a pick as breaking" and then used an ox to haul the stones away from the fields. Even so, he was more fortunate than Mr. F. N. Krischke, a British immigrant whose homestead appeared to be perfect at the outset. Two streams ran across the land, the grass was thick and there was a treed area within the quarter-section. Unfortunately, there were so many rocks in the soil that the land was almost impossible to farm (Turner, 1955).

obstructions that would prevent plowing of the sod. Alfred indicated that he could "pick stones and roots…[and] pick up scrub and burn it", tasks that required strength and endurance (Jones, 1902, p. 741). Another child, ten year old Martin Henderson of Alemeda, Saskatchewan (1902, p. 507) also noted that he could "draw stone off the land" but he was not able to clear brush or trees given his small size.

Once any obvious rocks were removed from the area and the roots from trees and brush were eliminated, the settlers could proceed to break the land. However, the plows, or more accurately the metal blades, were not necessarily strong enough to cut through the sod. If the metal was dulled or bent in cutting a furrow, the plow might bog down as the horse or oxen might not have the power to pull a dull blade through the resisting ground cover. This meant having to stop to sharpen or repair the plow whenever it was damaged. This difficulty in breaking the land was confirmed in the memoirs of Mr. S. T. St. John (1949), an American immigrant who homesteaded at Wilcox, Saskatchewan. He recalled that breaking called for many weeks of hard toil and frustrating delays for the settlers before they could begin to plant their first crop. The thick mat of interlaced roots was hard to cut through with only horses or oxen to power the plow and as such, long days that exhausted animals and farmers alike were the norm.

More children noted their participation once the process reached the stage at which plowing could begin. For example, according to eleven-year-old Charles Phillips (1967), he and his seventeen-year-old brother Glen assisted their father in the process of breaking the land. Glen was less enthusiastic about farming than Charles and as such, when it was time to begin working, Charles "drove the lead team" that plowed the land while his father "drove the wheelers and held the walking plow" (Phillips, 1967, p. 17). Charles also had the additional chore of sharpening the plow 'shear' to ensure that it would cut through the tough sod, a job that required him to beat any dents out of the metal portions of the plow using rocks and honing the edge with the same stones.[116]

Once the heavy breaking work was complete, only small teams of horses or oxen were required to pull plows through the dead and unresisting sod while the driver wrestled with the problem of keeping the furrow straight and the blade in the ground. Much of the work to be done was thus reduced to plowing the land in the spring to prepare it for a new crop or using harrows to break up clumps and smooth out the seed bed. In either case, the physical strength required to control the plow and animals was reduced and the task became one that could be taken over by almost any child if the need arose. Aaron Biehn of Humboldt, Saskatchewan, for example, was only eight years old when his labour was called upon to assist in plowing land on the family homestead. As he described the job, there was work enough for the entire family of six children and two adults as they

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[116] Despite the fact that Charles spent more time in the fields than his elder brother, it was Glen who suffered the consequences of the dangers associated with farm labour. The horses Glen was using to pull a seed-drill across the farmyard to a storage location bolted and he was thrown under the drill and dragged for several feet until the equipment came to rest. Neighbors helped stop the bleeding of the deep gash on his leg but he then had to be transported over fifty miles of rough terrain to a doctor as the cut went to the bone and had to be properly treated if he was to live and regain the use of the limb. He only recovered after a convalescence of several months.

"hitched [their] four horses to a gang plow and broke up sod [that was in large pieces and then] disked and harrowed and planted… All summer long everybody were busy preparing ground for the next year" (Biehn, u.d., p. 3). Frederick Hayne-Stephans (1901) was another child called on to work at plowing the fields. At fifteen years of age, he was well versed in the use of most farm equipment and he took on the job of plowing the entire eighty acres of summerfallow that his father had left bare the previous year. He indicated that he started the job using three horses on a walking plow but had switched over to a quicker method using four horses on a gang plow to speed up his progress.[117]

Other children younger than Frederick also expended their labour on preparing the land. For example, a ten-year-old boy from Burnside, Manitoba named Gordon Frook (1901) noted that he had worked with both walking and gang plows, the harrow and a land roller. An almost identical story was provided by another ten-year-old boy named Charlie Arnold (1901) from Indian Head, Saskatchewan. In Charlie's case, he plowed, harrowed and rolled but also indicated that he was learning to seed.[118]

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[117] The gang plow was more efficient as it possessed a number of blades rather than the single blade of a walking plow and thus could plow a wider swath on each pass through the fields.

[118] Numerous other boys also indicated that they had taken part in 'working the fields'. For example, J. Macdonald (1901), a twelve-year-old boy from Poplar Grove, Saskatchewan stated that he had plowed ten acres of land when he was only nine years old. Another twelve-year-old, Aylmer Whitehead (1902) from Weyburn, Saskatchewan noted that he was able to handle four horses when he disked and harrowed. Arthur Card (1902), a fourteen-year-old boy from Glenboro, Manitoba reported that beginning at 5:00 a.m. everyday, he either drove four horses on a gang plow, six horses on the harrows or used four when operating the cultivator depending on the work to be done. Only one boy had a complaint, fourteen-year-old Jas McLean (1901, p. 569) from Ellisboro, Saskatchewan. He indicated that he was involved with harrowing, disking and cultivating but that he preferred chores associated with riding as the field work was "tire-some on the legs".

Despite the absence of the need for physical prowess at this stage of the process, only three girls mentioned taking part in the plowing or harrowing of the land prior to seeding. For example, Sue Harrigan (1980, p. 8) of Battleford, Saskatchewan reported working the walking plow to prepare a field for the planting of oats (that would be used to feed livestock). Her only complaint over the exercise was that “it was slow work”. Maryanne Caswell (1968) of Clark’s Crossing, Saskatchewan also took part in soil preparation and indicated in a letter to her grandmother that she had assisted in planting the crop by driving the family oxen to harrow a seed bed while her father hand-sowed the crop behind her. Unlike Sue Harrigan, her inexperience led to a minor disaster as when she turned a corner too sharply, the oxen went out of control and dragged her until her father restrained the team. Maryanne indicated that her mother prepared a homemade remedy for the rope burns on her hands, “Balm of Gilead (black poplar)” to encourage healing (Caswell, 1968, p. 47). The final girl who mentioned plowing, Jennie Johnston of Neilburg, Saskatchewan, noted that it was never easy to work with animal propelled machinery. Skill was required and sometimes despite those skills, events could get out of control. For example she indicated that working with oxen was a problem as they were both large and powerful and followed orders only when convenient. At the first sight of a ‘heel fly’,[119] the oxen would be distracted from their work and would take off with the plow in a run to escape the irritating pest. Similarly, on sighting a slough, "that's where they would go and no amount of coaxing or swearing" would get them to return to the field until they were ready (Johnston, 1973, p. 21).

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[119] Jennie did not describe the insects but based on the reaction they provoked, it is safe to assume that they were similar to ‘horse flies’, large insects that could inflict painful bites.

As with most other functions performed by children, crop seeding (whether by hand or by using a 'deep' seeder) was simply one skill that they developed among many. As such, most of the individuals who indicated that they had used a plow or harrow or other implement pulled by animals were also capable of handling the seeding task for their family. For example, Willie Moore (1902), a fourteen-year-old boy from Oak Lake, Manitoba indicated that his labour was almost solely responsible for the year's crop as he had "plowed, harrowed, cultivated and sowed nearly all the crop" on his own in addition to contributing his labour to other projects on the farm (Moore, 1902, p. 506). Similarly, Arthur Hamlen (1902), an eleven-year-old boy from Beresford, Manitoba reported helping with seeding operations, while a fifteen-year-old from Miniota, Manitoba named Charles Clyde (1902) operated the family seeder in addition to all of the plows and other machinery they had available. Twelve-year-old Wilbert Frew (1902) of Pense, Saskatchewan was also handy with farm implements as he drove a plow, mower, rake and binder in addition to the seeder.[120]

As was the case with most agricultural implements, children could also take over driving the earth roller (otherwise known as a land packer) that was used to cover the seed after it had been planted and create a firm soil bed for the plants to grow in. Aaron Biehn was given this task when he was only nine years old. While he had no problem harnessing the four oxen that would pull the land packer or directing them to the appropriate field, he faced a problem similar to the one noted by Jennie Johnston. He mentioned in his memoir that he was packing on a hot day and unfortunately, the field was not far from a slough. There was "quite a bit of water in the slough so the oxen got hot and they went for the water. They took [Aaron] along and the oxen all laid down to cool off. [He] waited with them on the packer. They soon got up and … went back to packing the ground (Biehn, u.d., p. 3).

Other tasks that could be turned over to children in order to divide the workload included the weeding of the crops. This job was actually better suited to children's natural abilities as it did not involve great physical strength but did require workers who could be trained to distinguish a wheat shoot from a weed and whose fingers were small enough to fit between rows of grain without destroying the growing plants. Thus children such as Bertha Myer (1978, p. 3) were sent into the fields with the instruction that "no weeds were allowed to thrive undisturbed. [Her] work was to pull all weeds as they appeared amidst the grain." This same job was also performed by a thirteen-year-old boy named Harvey Potter (1901) whose family farm was located near Montgomery, Manitoba. Weeding was a part

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[120] It was interesting to note that no girls reported participating in the crop seeding process particularly as logic would dictate that anyone who could handle a plow or harrow was also likely to

of his daily routine that began at five o'clock in the morning (along with milking his family's three cows). Jessie Middleton of Elphinstone, Manitoba also mentioned that it was her job to pick "noxious weeds" out of the field (1902, p. 1020).

With respect to the final step in the crop cycle, the harvest, early farmers in the region used a scythe to cut the grain and then tied the grain into bundled sheathes. These sheathes would in turn be stacked in stooks to lessen the damage that rain or cold weather might cause before a threshing crew separated the grain to be cleaned. As farm tools became more available, the grain could be cut using a mower or a binder that would also tie the grain into sheathes for stacking. The process was still labour-intensive but not to the same degree and harvest proceeded more quickly, reducing the chances of damage from unseasonable weather.

During each step in the harvest scenarios set out above (except perhaps for the threshing stage given that threshing machines and crews were largely independent of the farms they served), the labour of children could be called upon to assist in 'bringing the crop in' before poor weather arrived. Florence Black (1902), for example, reported that in her area near Assiniboia, Saskatchewan, everyone had been working hard cutting down the grain, tying it into sheathes, and then attempting to stook the sheathes despite the strong winds that continually knocked down their stooks. Ralph Clench (1901), had also written about helping to stack the crop a year earlier, while Bertha Myer (u.d.) noted that she helped with

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be capable of assisting with seeding.

lunches for the men who cut and tied the grain but also contributed, along with other girls and women, by stooking while the men ate and rested. Stooking was also the task assigned to fourteen-year-old Gertrude Winstone (1902) and her thirteen-year-old brother while their father handled the cutting function.[121]

Of course, not all children were required to perform the hard work associated with the stooking process, however many were responsible for other tasks that had to be accomplished at that time of the year. For example, John Dunn (1902) of Russell, Manitoba was twelve years old when he drove a mower and binder[122] during the harvest season while his younger brother Henry Dunn (1902) was limited to a hay mower only. As a ten-year-old, his parents felt that Henry's driving experience was more limited and that he was too inexperienced to work with the cash grain crop. For others such as Walter Brown (1902), a nine-year-old from Portage la Prairie, Manitoba, his work focused on a different aspect of the harvest process. Rather than being involved in the use of the binder, Walter was in charge of changing the teams of horses on the two binders the family had operating to harvest their grain. By working efficiently, Walter was able to keep both binders active thereby increasing the speed and chances of success with the harvest.[123]

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[121] Silverman's research on farm families also recounts the more detailed story of a 12-year-old girl named Wilma Post who was stooking grain with her father and sister and how the process of threshing became easier with the advent of advanced technology. The girl stated that:

> My dad threw the bundles into the rack, and my sister and I would take turns at cutting them with a sickle blade, which is a sharp blade but on both sides. We'd cut the twine and then feed it into the threshing machine by hand. Then Dad would go for another load and we could have a little rest till he'd come back. That first threshing machine was fed by hand. The next one that I remember was the old steam machine, and boy, you didn't have to cut bundles for that: you could feed them in. So this was progress… (1984, p. 20).

[122] A binder was used to cut grain, bundle it together and mechanically tie the bundle with twine, eliminating a portion of the labour previously required before stoking the grain bundles.

With respect to harvesting hay (which was made up of the natural 'prairie wool' including grass, weeds, wild oats and other plants), this 'crop' was as vital as the cash crop of wheat as it was used to feed the horses, oxen and any cattle held over the winter.[124] Given that a cow and calf could eat three tons of hay, and a horse five tons, during a winter season (Stringer, 1888) at least twenty tons of hay would be required if a farmer had only three horses, a milking cow and a calf. It could take a week or more to harvest and store the necessary twenty tons of feed (Wilson, 1903). Confirmation of these figures was provided by the biography of Nellie Hislop. An estimate of three tons of hay per head being eaten over the winter season was given and the suggestion was made that the family's harvesting speed was two tons per day with her father mowing, and three children (and sometimes their mother) raking and coiling the hay into bundles to dry before stacking (Nuffield, 1987). This would mean approximately ten days to harvest twenty tons rather than only one week. (Assuming a settler owned a small herd of ten cows and had two horses to pull his wagon and farm machinery, forty tons of hay would be required to feed the animals over the winter months. Thus, almost three weeks of labour power would have to be expended for the sustenance of the farm animals).

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[123] In terms of getting the crops to market, only one girl referred to involvement with transporting wheat to the grain elevator. Jean Murray (1902), a fifteen-year-old girl from Lyleton, Manitoba indicated that her job had been to drive wagonloads of wheat twelve miles to the nearest railroad station. However, her workload was recently decreased as the rail line had been extended and her driving distance reduced to two miles.

[124] This crop could also be sold. For example, Elizabeth Turnbull (u.d., p. 2) indicated in her memoirs that aside from the hay that they would use for their own animals, her father would "sell it to the farmers around Lumsden [Saskatchewan]". The hay made up a large portion of the family income and when a prairie fire destroyed two hundred loads of hay that they had harvested in 1907, money became scarce and the family was forced to live on wild rabbits and potatoes that winter.

For W.E. McElhone, the experience of working to harvest hay for his grandparent's herd of cattle at the turn of the century was somewhat different from that of a homesteader's child assigned to cut hay on the family's land. In an interview conducted in 1975, he indicated that his parents had lived in the town of Stettler, Alberta but his grandparents had a farm located near Red Deer that he would visit (during his early teen years) at every opportunity. However, his visits were not vacations as he was expected to assist in the search for hay and pasture lands. His grandparents did not have sufficient resources to feed their herd on their own land and thus he was sent to look for unclaimed land where hay could be harvested and hauled back to the farm.

McElhone would ride the prairies for two or three weeks at a time, thereby making a contribution of his time for his grandparents' support. Of course, he had also been trained to use the machinery needed to harvest the hay and once a supply was located and mowed down, his job was to rake the hay into convenient piles for transport to the farm. McElhone (1975, p. 6) described this work and indicated that:

> I worked in the hay fields [and] they would give me an old team of horses that were quiet enough for me to drive and I would operate a buck rake … when I was hardly big

> enough to hold the lines. Putting up hay in those days was always put up in stacks, there was none of this bailing. Some of the machinery was too complicated for me but the buck rake was one thing I could operate, and bring the hay into the stacker with a buck Rake.

McElhone also advised the interviewer that during haying season, the hours of work were extremely long as he worked from early morning until sundown.

2) Livestock Production[125]

Just as some children worked long hours in the fields, others were involved with raising livestock for the market. William Rand (1901, p. 598), for example, wrote that when he was twelve years old, he assisted his father with the wheat that they grew on the homestead near Crystal City, Manitoba. He was proud to proclaim that he was "a great help" to his father but he also made a point of noting that he cared for a week old colt destined to be a riding horse plus several baby pigs, a calf and a two-year-old mare used for work on the farm. He made it clear that animal husbandry was his preference.

While William did not directly mention the amount of work or the number of different tasks that could go into providing proper care for the family animals clearly, the job was a difficult one requiring certain attributes. Children would require at least some size so that the livestock would respect them as the master of the situation, strength and agility to avoid being harmed by large animals, endurance as work was required every day and also riding skills as until fences were built to contain them, livestock had to be tracked across the prairies. A knowledge of edible plants and some information on livestock illnesses would also be of assistance.

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[125] As was the case with work devoted to crop production, Tables C and D in Appendix 2 indicate that an age distinction may also exist among children involved with raising livestock on the prairies. For both boys and girls, livestock production, work with horses and the handling of stable chores were tasks that children handled infrequently until they reached the 9 to 11 year age grouping. Thus, only 5 boys and 2 girls 8 years old or younger worked on production, 2 girls (and no boys) worked with the horses, and only one boy this young reported performing tasks in the stable. This changed as age increased as 50% of 9 to 11 year old boys (20 of 50) and 28.1% of girls (9 of 32) in the same age group took part in the raising of animals. This grew to 54.7% of boys (29 of 53)

While the size and power of many farm animals would deter many smaller children from participating, they could still handle the lighter regular tasks that also had to be performed if the family livestock were to be made ready for the market. Milk cows, pigs, chickens and other 'farmyard' livestock destined for sale or slaughter had to be fed and watered and their living areas had to be cleaned, the cows had to be milked, and equipment had to be kept in repair. Thus, as noted by Doris Thomson (1979, p. 1) a twelve year old girl whose family settled in the Saskatoon, Saskatchewan area, "work was ever present and as children we were permitted to 'help' with feeding the chickens, gathering the eggs, feeding the pigs, bringing in the cows, etc. but as we grew older the novelty wore off [as] the continuous repetition of such jobs became a chore." Mabel McDonald (1902) of Russell, Manitoba also mentioned her responsibilities on the farm. She had to milk eleven cows, feed the calves and several pigs, and help to turn the cream

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between 12 and 14 and 30% of girls (18 of 60). Similar patterns, although with lower proportions of the boys and girls involved, can be seen in those who worked with the family horses.

separator. Lena Prout (1902), an eleven-year-old from Rapid City, Manitoba worked at milking cows and churning butter while an eleven-year-old from Brandon, Manitoba named John Fardoe (1902) cleaned stables and bedded down calves. Similarly, a fourteen-year-old girl from Edberg, Alberta helped to look after forty-two head of cattle, noting that she had "been herding sheep and cattle since [she] was five years old" (Erickson, 1902, p. 507), while seven-year-old Gordon Hamlen (1902) from Beresford, Manitoba cleaned the hen house. (In his letter, he exclaimed over the mess that ninety laying hens could make!) Finally, Edna MacPhail (1902), a fourteen-year-old from Belmont, Manitoba, fed and watered several cattle and forty-five hens and cleaned their living spaces.

Aside from tasks associated with feeding and cleaning up after livestock,[126] or other animals and birds, children could also be assigned to look after livestock in the field and ensure that the animals remained at or traveled to the appropriate locations. In such cases, if cattle were too large for a child to handle, he or she could be tasked with herding sheep where the relative size difference would not be as large. For example, Horace Ririe (1974) was given the job of herding the family flock of sheep (his older brothers worked with the horses). By the time he was twelve, his father trusted him well enough to leave him with full authority over the entire herd of 3,000 ewes that were close to giving birth. Of course, in a family of fourteen children there were many hands available to share the work load. Even so, and despite his involvement with the flock, Horace also had to take care of one of the family's twelve milk cows (both early in the morning and in the evening), and take his turn churning the cream that was sold as butter to the local store.[127]

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[126] Other children had more arduous duties to perform if they were responsible for the cattle. For example, William Reesor, a six-year-old Saskatchewan boy was responsible for checking the cattle pens for dead animals. If any were found, he had to remove them to a waste area and skin them. Although his job was distasteful, it had to be done as dead cows would act as beacons for predators and scavengers, drawing them to the rest of the herd if they were not removed. However, he noted a positive aspect to this process as the "carcasses of course, made a real banquet for many coyotes and [the family] were greeted every evening and morning with their howling" (Reesor, 1977, p. 5).

Similarly, sixteen-year-old Bill Graham (1974), and his younger brothers, were responsible for the family herd. They handled the feeding of the animals, took them to pasture, found them at milking time and performed the actual milking process as well. (They also had to fit regular field work with a team of horses into their daily schedules).[128] Albert Corbett (1902) a thirteen-year-old boy from Rosser, Manitoba also reported helping with the herd. He worked alongside the family's hired hands to care for the seventy head of cattle they were raising for market and the thirty milk cows that they kept to produce milk and cream for sale.

Similar duties were imposed on twelve-year-old Anne Weir (1976) after her family migrated to a farm near Olds, Alberta from Ontario in 1895. The family had forty milk cows to care for (some owned and some owned in shares with other settlers) and Anne and her younger sister handled most of this responsibility. (She also had one older sister who helped their mother with the housework, an older brother who tended to work off farm for a wage and her father who worked in the fields. As such, she may have obtained control of the animals by default.) Problems for Anne were common as there "was no fenced field … The cows went where they liked and had to be brought up every night" (Weir, 1976, p. 3).[129] She allocated the job of locating the milk cows to her younger sister which allowed Anne some free time in which she could check their inventory of milk and milk products, and plan their sale. The milk that was obtained from these cows was separated, churned for butter and made into cheese, all of which were sold, along with any remaining milk and cream, to creameries in nearby towns.

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[127] Some children were responsible for warning off predators that might harm the farm animals. John Watson (1975), for example, worked as a shepherd when he was only ten years old. He had approximately five hundred sheep under his care and used his dogs to scare off coyotes. However, the job proved to be beyond his capabilities when packs of the predators started attacking the sheep. It was decided that the herd would be sold off as too many animals were being lost.

[128] Wellington McMahon (1902) was also assigned to locating and milking twelve cows twice a day. This twelve-year-old boy from Dunara, Manitoba woke at 6:00 a.m. each day, traced the cows, herded them to the barn, milked them, separated the cream and then repeated the process each evening after supper. Similarly, Frederick Arnott (1902), an eleven-year-old from Calf Mountain, Manitoba was given the job of moving the family's eighteen head of cattle between the home yard and a pasture located one mile away every morning. Each evening, he had to track the cattle down and herd them back to the farm.

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[129] This problem was a common one in the early homesteading years as no fences existed to keep cattle from wandering at will. Thus, as in the case of James Russell whose family lived near Drumheller, Alberta, locating the cattle and returning them to the home-site was a daily (or twice daily) job (Russell, 1912). The same task was assigned to the two children of Eliza Wilson, a woman of Scottish descent who entered Canada in 1889 with her husband, an officer in the North West Mounted Police. The family farmed near Red Deer, Alberta and had several milk cows and many cattle. The boys had to ensure that the cattle did not wander too far but she indicates in her diary that in June, 1901, it took an entire day to trace the animals as their tracks were washed out by a rain storm that had been ongoing for several days (Wilson, 1901). The Wilsons were not the only ones who faced unusual difficulties. Fred Wright (1902) of Rose Hill, Manitoba faced a very difficult time when tracing cattle. He was thirteen and understood what he had to do but unfortunately, the family did not have a horse for him to use and he therefore tracked the cattle by foot and herded them back the same way. He hoped to have a pony during the next year's tracing season. The problem was entirely different for twelve year old Marie DesGagnie (1902). Her difficulty was in herding the cattle that she had located back to the family land as she became disoriented and lost in the brush of the McDonald Hills in Saskatchewan. By the time she was found thirty-six hours later, she was hungry, cold and wet as it had rained the first night and snowed the second.

It should be noted that cows were not the only animals to wander off the homesteads as was illustrated in a story told by Grace Carr (u.d.) in her memoir. She was the youngest of three children moved to a homestead near Wood River, Saskatchewan and was idling away an afternoon watching the family's new pigs in their pen. After they dug their way under the boards of the pen, Grace watched them run around the yard and then race up the road. Bored, she went into the house and "casually told [her] mother that the pigs were running away" (p. 4). Grace and one brother were left to entertain themselves while their mother and older brother left in the wagon to find the vacationing pigs. They returned in an hour with both animals.

Similarly, but on a larger scale, Isabel Perry (nee McNaught) and Betty McNaught (1976) disclosed that they had joint responsibility for the family cattle. Their father and an uncle had planned to homestead near Edson, Alberta in 1911 but as Betty had contracted smallpox and scarlet fever, the migration was delayed until she had recovered and her mother had regained the strength and stamina she had used up in caring for her daughter. These young sisters and their mother finally entered the prairies in 1912. While their father used his labour to built a thirty-foot by twenty-eight foot log house with a sod roof and their mother dealt with domestic tasks, Isabel and Betty took on the responsibility of caring for the family cattle. As explained by Isabel and Betty, they performed some subsistence and domestic tasks but in response to a question concerning whether they were required to help out at home, they advised the interviewer that they primarily "herded cows, hunted cows, rode horseback for cows and did odd chores but we weren't very useful as far as housework [was] concerned" (1976, p. 12).

Of course, in those situations that required more strength than the girls possessed, their father was always 'on call' to assist. For example, on the evening of the first Halloween they spent on the prairies, a cow went missing and given the importance of each and every cow to the family's financial situation, a search was mounted by Betty and her father. The animal was found stranded near the shore of the lake where it had walked out on the ice to find water, broken through the thin ice covering and gotten stuck in the muddy bottom. Betty was sent back to the farm to hitch up the family oxen and bring them back to the lake but they did not have a long enough rope to reach the stranded bovine. Trips to nearby farm sites brought extra help and a longer rope and eventually the cow was rescued.[130]

Care of the family livestock was also turned over to the young girls in the Houston family but the circumstances were much graver (McLeod, 1977). The family arrived in the Consort area of Alberta in 1912. The head of the family, James Houston, was ill and as a result, two of his daughters, Ethel and Pearl (ages eleven and nine respectively) were made responsible for herding their cattle to the homestead. This was a sixty mile journey from the nearest railhead and they had to handle the cattle on their own as their thirteen year old brother 'Son' was both a backup driver for the four ox team pulling their main wagon and the primary driver for the smaller supply wagon pulled by two half-wild horses.

For Ethel and Pearl, two girls with no experience in handling large numbers of cattle, taking on responsibility for a cattle drive in their first week in the west was almost too much to handle. Cattle tended to drift away from the wagons and it was up to the girls to track them down and force them back into the procession, a time and energy consuming routine that they managed to reduce with some thought. A calf was placed in the back section of the second wagon and as expected, its mother followed faithfully behind. This provided a focus for the rest of the herd and they did not stray as often. (Unfortunately for the Houston family, their father's condition did not improve and he died just two years after entering the region. Thus, the mother, two daughters and 'Son' were forced to rely on each other even more. After the father's funeral, 'Son' continued to help with outdoor chores, Ethel and Pearl took on full responsibility for the cattle, while the "indomitable widow, clad in her calico blouse and long full black skirt, was a familiar figure riding the plow in her field and driving four horses" (McLeod, 1977, p. 13). In this case the family banded together for mutual protection and support and to generate, through their numbers if not their individual strength, sufficient labour to maintain production and generate enough income to overcome the obstacles in their path.

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[130] Not all of the sisters' experiences involved hard work or danger and there were moments of levity to lighten the mood on occasion. For example, on the wagon trip to the homestead, the girls had been in charge of the eight chickens and single rooster the family brought with them from Ontario. The rooster "was used to traveling" and left camp without the family one morning and the girls gave chase. The escaping rooster took them half way around a nearby lake. In terms of the evening of the 'mud-stuck cow', this event also finished with laughter as a neighbor's daughter who

3) Summary

The stories of individual children set out above makes it clear that children's labour was utilized on family farms to carry out a broad range of tasks and as with the work of adult members of the farm family, the work of the children was influenced by gender considerations. Boys were more active in performing fieldwork including land clearing, breaking the sod, plowing, harrowing, seeding

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came by to watch the rescue effort found that in honor of Halloween, someone had stuck horns on her horse while she was inside having tea after the event (McNaught, 1976, pp. 3,12).

and harvesting than girls. Few girls participated in these activities, but two girls, one anonymous and one a young Ukrainian girl, reported that they had participated in the difficult task of clearing the land. Other than these two girls, only one other female noted expending her labour power on plowing the fields for planting, while others weeded the crop and helped with the harvest process by providing lunch for the men and boys involved in the heavy labour and by tying and stooking the grain while the men and boys ate and rested.

Thus, the work assigned to children as a group covered the full spectrum of crop production activity that was not restricted by the amount of physical strength and endurance required for particular jobs. Children such as Charlie Keeping (1902), a fourteen-year-old boy from Austin, Manitoba, could be called upon to handle any phase of the crop production cycle ranging from plowing and harvesting to lighter work such as driving wagon loads of wheat from the thresher to the nearest grain elevator for sale. However, while children could handle a wide range of labour requirements, not every child could physically handle every job and not every child possessed all of the skills required for each task.

Further, while every child reported working on some form of necessary activity, most seemed to have 'preferred' forms of labour or, at least, mentioned one type more than others. For example, while Leola Dinsmore of Innisfail, Alberta (1901, p. 598) mentioned being responsible for "a few head of stock", most of her comments were directed at her experiments with growing different types of grain on two fields set aside for her use. She proudly noted that she did not have space in her letter to describe all of the varieties of grain she had grown and indicated that in her view, the best way to learn how to farm was to read practical articles on the subject and gain personal experience by taking part in the process.

Unfortunately, Leola was realistic enough to recognize that she would have difficulty in fulfilling her dream of farming since she was female and thus subject to pressure to conform to the behavior expected of her gender. Her projected fate was to become a farm wife rather than a farmer. As she described the situation, "[if] I were a man, I would be a farmer all my life, but being a girl, I do not have such a good chance although I am making the best of my opportunities at present" (Dinsmore, 1901, p. 598). She was, however, unusual for her gender as disinterest in caring for animals was not typical of girl farmers. Far more girls reported being involved in the care of market livestock (feeding and watering young calves and pigs, milking cows and separating cream, gathering eggs, herding sheep and cleaning the barns and pens in which the animals were kept) than had noted participation in crop production. Many of the boys also reported working with the livestock and as such, girls did not dominate this labour activity the way boys did crop production but clearly, among the girls, labour was more often applied to animal husbandry than market crops. As such, it is evident that many farm children contributed their labour to the performance of tasks that generated money in the market for the farm.

CHAPTER SIX

ENTREPRENEURIAL LABOUR

The purpose of this Chapter is to discuss the involvement of children in entrepreneurial endeavors, activities designed to raise money from sources off the farm. Funds were desperately needed by many families to purchase necessary items, including equipment and seed and as such, all family members who could devote part of their labour power to money making activities were expected to do so.[131]

As noted in section one, adults set the example by taking on paid work whenever possible and both boys and girls took up the challenge of seeking employment off-farm with businesses and other farm families. While boys tended to obtain a more diverse range of employment, girls were effectively limited to working as domestics but in both cases, their wages were turned over to the family. Children were also able to raise money in other ways. For example, as set out in section two, children on the farm took part in raising various kinds of animals and birds for eventual sale. They could also obtain money by participating in the gopher bounty or by trapping furs (see section three) or by collecting and selling fruits and vegetables (as discussed in section four). Section five completes the Chapter with a review of the types of entrepreneurial activities pursued by farm children and notes the gender impacts on their choices.

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[131] While participation in entrepreneurial activities was not as widespread as working in productive tasks had been among children, participation was pursued by a total of 48 boys and 33 girls (Table K, Appendix 2). As shown by Tables E and F of Appendix 2, certain activities did attract more attention than others. The raising of farm animals for eventual sale was the most popular task, drawing 28 girls and 43 boys, with paid employment being the next most common money-raising task for 8 girls and 15 boys. Few children worked at selling fruit or other produce (only 5 girls and

1) Paid Employment[132]

The need for the family to raise funds in whatever way possible was recognized by the federal government. For example, a 1906 brochure respecting the 'Last Best West' recommended that any adult settler with less than $500 take on paid labour for "a year until one learns the value of things as well as the method of farming" (Minister of the Interior, 1906, p. 15). The real fear may have been that those without sufficient assets and those who did not develop a work ethic quickly would not be able to survive financially and would abandon the land, slow the settlement process and present a negative image for the region.

The government's work recommendation applied to both single and married settlers and whether or not the family had children. In fact, the government offered a free placement service that would find work for those interested in applying. It made the persuasive argument that by working off farm, a young man could "from the beginning, earn and save enough each year to make

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2 boys took part) and while hunting gophers for the government bounty and trapping for furs attracted 16 boys, only three girls were mentioned as participating.

[132] As revealed in Tables E and F of Appendix 2, participation in off farm paid work became more common as children aged. For both boys and girls, employment was rare until they reached 12 years of age. Only 3 girls and 4 boys in the 6 to 8 and 9 to 11 age groups reported working for money. No girls in the 12 to 14 age group worked but 6 boys did earn wages at that age. However,

payment on say 160 acres of land", and young women could find employment as domestics earning between six and ten dollars per month (Minister of the Interior, 1906, p. 15).

However, even without such advice, the stories of the individuals who settled the prairie region suggested that the need for money was obvious to settlers. For instance, Lockhart (1978, p. 10) noted in her memoir that "no one had any money to buy" goods. She went on to elaborate that her father, in a bid to earn needed cash in the first year that the family was on the farm, went to work for the CPR. He used his wages to purchase three sows, one boar and pig feed to begin a hog operation on their farm. He had reasonable success on the hog side of the operation. Seventeen piglets were produced and fed up to sale weight but due to a lack of cash resources in the community, he found it hard to sell the animals. The price he finally received was two dollars per animal, far less than he had paid for feed for the pigs. Even investing more labour into the project by taking the time to butcher a sow did not raise the price that people could pay for fresh meat. Instead of generating cash for his family's needs, he ended up losing $100 on the venture.

A similar story was related by Grace Carr (u.d.) in her memoirs of life as a child immigrant in the Wood River area of Saskatchewan. Her family moved to Wood River in 1910 but she had two aunts who had immigrated some years before and thus knew the local economy very well. They were certain that money could

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paid work was more common for those over 14 as shown by the fact that in addition to the 5 boys taking part, 5 girls also noted that they had found jobs.

be made cooking for bachelors but their plan fell apart when they discovered that the bachelors were as short on cash as everyone else.[133] However, they did arrange a deal in which her aunts supplied the expertise needed to prepare and bake the bread while the bachelors supplied sufficient ingredients to make enough bread for both themselves and the two ladies. Thus, her aunts may not have received cash but they did obtain their own bread for the cost of their own labour.

Other methods of fund raising that did not rely on paid employment also existed but could not be depended upon as steady sources of income. Success at winning a prize at a local fair, for example, could add an occasional windfall to the family finance pool. For example, ten-year-old Willie Darwood (1902, p. 507) from Meadow Lea, Manitoba was a proficient rider and using this skill, won first place in a riding contest at a local fair and a cash award of $3. Thirteen-year-old Harvey Potter (1901) from Montgomery, Saskatchewan also won prizes but his achievements were based on his farming expertise as he had the best Holstein milk cow at the fair and also won for the 'early rose' potatoes that he had planted. Similarly, Eva Cox (1902), a twelve-year-old from Pincher Creek, Alberta, obtained prizes for both handwriting and sewing a handkerchief. However, even if a person was as lucky (or skilled) as the mother of Harriette Parkinson (1978, p. 3) who won "many prizes, which were cash - a scarce item", prize money could not provide all of the necessities a family required on a regular basis. This meant that working off farm in a paid position was a more practical alternative. Employment could be pursued during those times in the year when no farm related labour was required or at any time that the necessary tasks could be distributed between family members while one or more family members were employed elsewhere.

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[133] Rollings-Magnusson (2000) recounts several examples of women active in the marketplace to raise funds for household or other farm needs. These women sold eggs, butter, preserves,

For example, Kathleen Smith was less than eleven when her family immigrated from Ireland to homestead near Weyburn, Saskatchewan. Her family's "only money supply… was what [her father] made out during the fall" when he went to Manitoba to work on a threshing crew and earn the money needed to buy their "year's supply of food" while her mother and siblings stayed on the farm (Smith, u.d., p. 7). Kathleen noted that extra help could be obtained when needed as "farmers exchanged work with each other and helped each other for a number of years in nearly every way" but these exchanges would have been out of friendship or done as a form of barter rather than being cash transactions as "no money was ever spent except for real necessities" (Smith, u.d., p. 13).

Life was not as difficult for Cora Montjoy (u.d.) from Yellow Grass, Saskatchewan. She was the seventh and youngest child of English immigrants who arrived in south-central Saskatchewan in 1899 and was too young to take on paid work herself. However, her father, mother and oldest brother all found ways of obtaining funds for the family. The men both worked for the CPR "ten hours a day, six days a week, for $1.25 a day" while her mother earned extra money for

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doughnuts and products that they had knitted or crocheted. Turner (1955) noted that some women even took in laundry for bachelors who had no one to help them and acquired capital in that fashion.

their needs by selling bread to local bachelors, charging twenty-five cents for three large loaves (Montjoy, u.d., p. 13). This bread production went on for three years until the family was more comfortable with their ability to earn sufficient funds from farming operations.

Employment was also seen as a necessity by the family of Sylvia Mitchell. She indicated that in 1907 her father "worked in the town [Regina] twenty miles away for money to buy their food and walked home sometimes at the week end and back again on Sunday night" (Mitchell, 1976, p. 1). A similar story was told by Laura Matz of her father's thirty mile trip to a saw-mill in Prince Albert, Saskatchewan where he worked to raise the funds necessary for the family. Laura emphasized that such off-farm work was important as they were in desperate financial straits. She stressed their monetary problems by using an example. The family was so poverty-stricken that candles were blown out at night and reading was done by the "dim circle of light" from the opened stove door to save money (Matz, 1978, p. 1).

The family of Augustine Koett (u.d.) who had immigrated to a homestead in the Rosthern, Saskatchewan area in 1903 from the United States faced the same poverty problem as described by Mitchell and Matz above. Recognizing that they did not have enough money to survive, the family went to work for the Canadian National Railway Company in 1904 to take part in the building of the northern rail route. Her father was a foreman on a construction crew while her mother worked as a crew cook. All six children were taken along, in lieu of having someplace to leave them, and lived in a tent during the construction season. Unfortunately, the situation did not work out well for the family as at the end of the season, the company was supposedly bankrupt and refused to pay wages for the seven months work the family had performed. This created an even more desperate need for cash for the family and after delivering the family back to the homestead, Augustine's father went to work on bridge construction throughout the winter months. Unfortunately, without money, the mother and children had to resort to living on wild birds until the father returned with his wages.[134]

The example set by the parents made the need for work clear to their children and in many families, there was an expectation that their children would

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[134] This story emphasizes the point that farmers were only a single mistake away from poverty and starvation. As such, the need to undertake both on and off farm work and the necessity of spending only such amounts as required to ensure the survival and growth of the farm and the family became so ingrained that these thoughts were translated to poetry such as the verse published anonymously in December, 1898 (p. 577):

> A farmer's life is a happy one,
> Though he toils from day to day,
> Saving and frequently denying himself,
> In his efforts to make things pay.
>
> The city bred with their borrowed airs,
> May turn up a dainty nose,
> And scornfully stare at the thrifty farmer,
> And jeer at his old-fashioned clothes.

As noted, the author believed that city people did not have the same focus as farmers and thus, would not understand how life had to be lived in the country. This view was substantiated by a woman named Bas Macpherson. In an April, 1910 letter she wrote to a woman named 'Lily Anna', Bas made a rude remark about farmers who "dress most outrageously (probably because money is a novelty to them)" (Macpherson, 1910, p. 7). She obviously failed to realize (and did not bother to discover) that as implied in the poem, farming an unbroken country under a harsh financial system meant that only necessities could be purchased. To have the best chance at survival, money could not be wasted on 'fashionable' outfits when the following month might see an equipment failure or an illness requiring expensive medicine. In essence what the poem suggested was that farmers as a obtain paid employment and send their wages back to the family. This might mean working for neighbors in the field or in the home if a domestic servant was sought, or employment with one of the small companies operating in the region. In the case of Roy DeVore for example, work at a variety of paid positions began as soon as his family arrived in Calgary from the United States. Even though Roy was only a teenager, he took on work at a dairy farm (until the haying season was complete), a brickyard (but had to quit as the labour required more strength than the youth possessed) and at the Calgary Brewery before the family moved to their homestead. Balancing the heavy labour of establishing the farm with the need for money to pay for equipment, food and other needs, he continued to take on jobs during the winters when the farming operation slowed. At various times, Roy worked in a lumber camp (catching pneumonia and being off work for several weeks), a meat packing plant, a cement plant, a sawmill, with a stoking and threshing crew, and for a lumber company floating timber down the Red Deer River. For his pains over the years, Roy had managed to provide funds for the family to buy food, clothing and two oxen, and between his father and himself, acquired a wagon and a team of horses.[135]

For Charles Phillips, the experience of paid work and labouring to help in the development of the homestead was the same but the circumstances were more

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group were prepared to work as many hours as necessary, whether on or off farm, and deny themselves comfort and 'luxuries' to establish their farms and keep them running.

[135] Robert Hogg was sent out to work at age eleven so that the family could buy a cow (Rowles, 1952). As wages in 1883 were only fifty cents per day, he worked many weeks to raise the

dire. His father died when Charles was thirteen years old, two years after entering the homestead. As he, his mother and his crippled brother Glen had no other option, Charles continued to help with the farm but also took on work doing odd jobs for neighbors for little pay. He managed to obtain a position as a ranch hand that paid a dollar-a-day in wages, enough to support the family's needs, and unlike Roy DeVore, managed to hold on to the same position for several years. Similarly, John Watson (1975) was also lucky enough to hold down the same job for over ten years. His specialty before his family immigrated from Scotland, was raising sheep and he found employment easily once his skills were known. From the point that he was ten years old and taking home fifty cents per day to his mother, to the age of twenty when his wage had increased to one dollar per day (thirty-five dollars per month if he also assisted with harvesting hay for winter feed), he continued to work with sheep.

For some farm families, particularly those beginning the process of developing a homestead, circumstances were such that difficult decisions had to be made respecting priorities on the use of available labour. Balancing the need to break the land, plant a crop, grow a garden, build a house, obtain money or to work on any one of hundreds of other important projects could be difficult but having children to share the burden could reduce the problems. For example, the Roberts family homesteading near Talbot in southern Alberta had the option of sending the

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purchase price but once acquired, it provided milk for over two years before being butchered. Unlike Roy, Robert was able to quit working once the specific goal was attained.

two older sons off farm to work for badly needed money. This left fourteen-year-old Brockway, his father and his mother to work the farm. There was a great deal of work to be done but the family needed the $100 the two older sons could earn between them for goods that had to be purchased. As such, those who remained at the farm intensified their work efforts as much as possible to make up for the missing teenagers (Roberts, 1971).[136]

Similar circumstances led to the employment of the three young Hislop children as potato diggers and pickers. The family was short on the cash that it would need to purchase "such diverse things as coal oil, school books and writing materials, matches, salt, and barbed wire" and thus when their neighbor approached Mrs. Hislop about hiring her three children, she had to consider the request carefully. She had been earning money herself by baking bread for a nearby bachelor at a rate of fifty cents for four two-pound loaves but her effort to sell fresh and canned vegetables in Winnipeg had failed. Money was not being earned fast enough to pay the necessary expenses and she had little choice but to rent the three children to the neighbor. He was prepared to pay fifty cents per child per day for three days plus meals. Although she was "loath to hire out her own children", she was "willing to help out the kindly old man" and the $4.50 could prove valuable for the family so permission was granted (Nuffield, 1987, p. 48).[137]

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[136] While boys would go off-farm to work for wages for their families, two other boys, John and Bill, reported that they were able to make 'wages' at home. Fortunately, their family homestead was located on the trail to Edmonton and travelers frequently spent the night in the family barn. John and Bill earned money by looking after the traveler's horses for pay and despite their father's policy that no traveler would be turned away from a place to rest, refused to make room for a non-paying guest by taking the horses from the barn. Instead, they told the traveler to leave if he wouldn't sleep in the shed instead of the barn but did not bother to advise him that the next closest rest stop was twenty-five miles away. Unfortunately for the brothers, their father was staying at the next rest stop when the weary traveler arrived the next morning after driving his team all night. Hearing about the lack of hospitality at his farm, the father expressed his displeasure over the greeting the traveler had received and "the boys found out when he arrived home" (Wood, 1976, p. 3).

Boys were not the only children to find themselves in a position where employment off the farm was of greater importance to the family than the labour contribution they could make in direct farming operations. Anne Weir (1976), a child who was involved in the production of dairy goods for sale, was a case in point. Although she was performing a valuable role in ensuring the viability of the family farm, other members of the Weir family who had stayed behind in Ontario five years before arrived in the Olds, Alberta district, including a younger sister, three older sisters and an older brother. Anne's position on the dairy side of the farm business was assumed by one of her older sisters and she suddenly had no farm related work to perform. Thus, it was determined by her family that earning money by working off farm as a domestic servant would prove a better use of her labour power. Accordingly, Anne went to work for a young family with two children when she was seventeen. She cooked and cleaned and looked after the children but as a dutiful daughter, she ensured that all of her wages,[138] except for the amount needed to pay for clothing and some personal items, went to her family. Even though she had little money of her own, she enjoyed her independence and "didn't think of being poor…had enough to eat… had enough clothing… [and everyone was] pretty much in the same boat" (Weir, 1976, p. 6).

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[137] Children's labour could also be used to solidify relations between families in the area. For example, Nellie Hislop (Nufield, 1987) was asked, when she was 11 years old, to leave her family over the Christmas season and spend two weeks assisting the local Presbyterian minister's wife with household tasks. The minister had a 2-year-old daughter and did not expect to be available to help his wife due to his religious duties. While Nellie was surprised by the request given her lack of domestic skills, she agreed to take on this work at no cost.

Other girls who obtained jobs performed a variety of tasks. For example, L. Cook (1902) of Wishart, Saskatchewan, stated that she ran the local Post Office, assisted with the weekly stage coach and also had a job as a housekeeper. The energy and dedication that she put into earning a living kept herself and two younger siblings from starving in the west while their father lived in Ontario, thereby proving that she was as tough and determined to succeed as any adult pioneers.

So too was Elizabeth Turnbull (u.d.), a girl whose family immigrated to take up farming near Lumsden, Saskatchewan in 1905 when she was only six years old. By the time she was seven, Elizabeth noted that she held a paid position as a housekeeper with a neighbor. She cared for the baby and stayed at their house during the day. She took on a different job the following year, washing dishes, scrubbing floors and performing general tasks and then moved between houses as a cleaning person once her sister was old enough to assist her in handling several houses at the same time. While she and her sister were working as domestics,[139] their father was holding a job with the CPR and her mother was working as a nurse. As such, all of the Turnbulls took the need to generate income very seriously and devoted as much of their time as was available to paid employment as the income produced by farming was insufficient to maintain the family. As noted by McLeod (1977, p. 13) "a lot was expected of farm children in those days and they lived up to it."[140]

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[138] With respect to the wages that could be expected for domestic labour, Anna Farion (1978) indicated that she obtained a job in 1897 assisting a farm wife with washing clothes, scrubbing the floor and hauling water for $1.00 per month. Once the family determined that she was a hard working girl, the wage was increased to $2.50 per month with a promise of a further raise to $6.00 per month after a three-month trial period. Her duties were also expanded to include milking three cows, looking after three children and preparing meals for two hired hands. Every cent of her

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income was also sent home to her parents as they were so poor that "all they had to eat was rabbit meat, and without bread at that" (p. 90)

[139] Most girls worked as domestics for short periods of time but on occasion, daughters would move in with families who did not have older girls of their own. They would assist with all of the domestic labour for the household (Barber, 1991). For example, an anonymous 16-year-old female contributor to Broadfoot's book, The Pioneer Years (1976, p. 214) stated that she hated handling field work on her family homestead and was thus happy to accept an offer of $20 per month to perform domestic work for a neighbouring farmer. The farmer's wife had died years before and therefore she was responsible for cleaning up years of grime in addition to being up by 5:00 a.m. to bake and cook meals for the farmer and his sons. Her father would only agree to the arrangement if the entire $20 was paid directly to him. In other words she would be working "15 hours a day, 6 days a week" for nothing but anticipating improved working conditions, she was still prepared to accept the job.

[140] Not all children were happy with the prospect that their hard work would go unrewarded. For example, Ben Kroening (1913, p. 10) rebelled over his father's decision to rent him out to do field work for a neighbour. Given that the wages would be going directly to the father, Ben decided to sit under a tree using the logic that "if he wasn't going to get paid, he was not going to do the work". Ben did not mention the outcome of his protest.

2) Raising Animals for Sale[141]

As noted earlier, the second form of entrepreneurial labour to be discussed involved the expenditure of effort in the raising of animals for eventual sale by children. This type of activity served a twofold purpose, firstly the creation of a valuable asset that could add to the chances of family survival and success, and secondly the reinforcement of children's lessons in the need for work, responsibility and the 'happiness' that could be found in farm living. Prairie social norms were such that children were encouraged and expected to assist their families but at the same time, society also had an interest in seeing that children grew into adults capable of industrious behavior in the agricultural west. As such, the socialization or teaching aspect of parental control over children required that children be trained to perform farm work and enjoy farm living but at the same time, the effort expended on this training task was not 'wasted' as saleable products could be developed and necessary work accomplished in the course of the training process.

Numerous pieces of advice on these points were directed at parents by 'experts' and those other individuals who felt they had a worthwhile opinion to express. However, the situation for male children on the farm was somewhat different than that of females and thus, the counsel provided to parents differed depending on the sex of their children. For example, the focus of the male working 'education' under the gender norms of the time was seen as being external to the home. As such, assisting their mothers with household work would not provide the skills and opportunities to generate income appropriate to the male sex. Rather, as suggested by Alex McLay (1901) of Horse Hills, Alberta, a father could make life on the farm more worthwhile for boys if they would:

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[141] Unlike paid employment, Tables E and F indicate that the raising of animals for sale was an activity that children of all ages participated in. A 4 year old boy reported working with animals as did 3 boys and 2 girls in the 6 to 8 age group, 16 boys and 12 girls in the 9 to 11 age group and 18 boys and 11 girls between 12 and 14. The number of participating children over 14 was lower (5

> build a good warm workshop, where farm implements, harness, etc., can be repaired on wet and stormy days. There, the boys can be taught lessons of thrift, economy and industry.... And the farmer who has boys and invests in a blacksmith's outfit will soon find them doing nearly all the blacksmithing required (1901, p. 245).

Similarly, an article in the August, 1899 edition of The Nor'-West Farmer, advised that a father should teach his son to "respect his father's calling" (not his mother's) and "instill in his mind that the great men of all ages were sons of farmers" (Anonymous, 1899b, p. 622). The father was also advised to ensure that there was some play mixed in with the work each day and to encourage all efforts, share plans for the use of the land and the future of the farm, and pay their sons some wage for their work. It was believed that this would both give the son a sense that his labour was worth something, and provide him with a stake in the operation through the planning process.

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boys and 3 girls) but as there were only 12 boys and 7 girls of this age in the study, the rate of participation remained high.

However, one suggestion that was common to the proper upbringing of both boys and girls was to make children responsible for the performance of duties on the farm, such as caring for one or more animals from birth. It was believed that children in this position would develop a sense of responsibility and devote themselves more fully to the farming lifestyle while developing a valuable commodity for the family. This approach, profiting from the work efforts of children while giving guidance on necessary skills, was mentioned often by those theorizing on the best means for convincing children to adopt farming as an occupation and remain on the farms to take over from the parental generation of settlers.

For example, the letters and articles written to prairie newspapers such as "Interesting the Children in Livestock" published in a 1901 edition of The Nor'-West Farmer and "To Keep the Boys and Girls on the Farm" submitted by 'A Father' in 1902 both recommended animal husbandry very highly. It was seen as a motivator to encourage children to stay on the farm and contribute to the well-being of the family. Not only would practical lessons in the proper care and feeding of livestock and in the provision of sustenance or income for the family be provided but in addition, the child's imagination would be captured at an early age and directed at the farming life as a source of satisfaction. Not all fathers managed to profit from their children's efforts[142] but coincidentally (or not), raising animals became one of the most common forms of entrepreneurial behavior among farm children.

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[142] In a letter entitled "Bob's Calf but Pa's Steer", an anonymous writer told the story of a family in which the children were encouraged to raise cattle (Anonymous, 1902). The letter indicated that the

Four-year-old Verne Hunt, for example, had his older sister write his story to The Nor'-West Farmer in June, 1902, and indicated that among the numerous tasks he performed on the farm was the responsibility for his personal animals. He indicated that he had "a cow called Flora, two pigs and some horses" and while this seems like a large number of animals for a child of his age to own, it was not unusual for parents to present their children with animals to raise (Hunt, 1902, p. 507). In fact, Verne's seven-year-old sister Winnifred Hunt also reported that she owned animals, in her case a cow and a calf, and that the family as a whole had "eleven horses and about forty head of cattle" (Hunt, 1902, p. 507).

Calves and cow/calf pairs were the most common types of animal to be raised by farm children, possibly because they were easy to raise (having no special diet or other needs) or possibly because cattle were the most common type of livestock on the prairies.[143] Typical of the dozens of children who noted raising

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two sons each raised a calf from birth on their father's instructions, ensuring that the calves were fed, watered, had a clean stall, ate properly and had shelter as necessary. However, when it came time to sell the animals, the sons were not consulted. It was assumed that the father would receive the $100 purchase price but on the day of the sale, the steers were not to be found and the father's sale fell through. However, "snug in each boy's pocket was a fifty dollar bill" (Anonymous, 1902, p. 508).

[143] While grains were the primary source of earnings for farmers on the prairies, various types of livestock were also of importance. Urquhart and Buckley (1965, Series L167-232) noted that animal husbandry grew quite rapidly on the plains with prairie residents owning 20,000 milk cows, 40,000 other cattle, 28,000 horses, 17,000 hogs and 6,000 sheep in 1881. By 1891, the number of each type of animal had at least tripled and some quadrupled or more. Thus, there were 83,000 milk cows, 148,000 cattle, 148,000 horses, 54,000 hogs and 36,000 sheep reported that year and the expansion continued as the century changed. Between 1901 and 1911, livestock herds (and flocks) continued to grow in size with the number of milk cows increasing from 134,000 to 447,000, cattle

calves were Edwin Hardy (1901), a young man from the Yorkton, Saskatchewan area who also grew his own cattle feed, an eleven-year-old girl named Elsie Brown (1902) from Winlaw, Saskatchewan with a cow named Cherry, and a boy named Ralph Clench (1902) with a calf named 'King Edward'.[144] Ralph's older sister, Elsie Clench (1901), was also a consummate cattle entrepreneur. She planned to turn a $5 present received from a cousin into her own cattle empire by, in her own words, buying "a calf which I have named Barney. I am going to keep it until I can sell it for enough to buy two heifers if they do well I will have quite a number bye and bye" (Clench, 1901, p. 598).

Numerous other youngsters also mentioned owning animals, including Eddie Northey (1902), an eight-year-old from Holland, Manitoba. According to a letter written by Eddie, he owned a different set of animals. Instead of cattle, he had a horse (named Prince) and several chickens. Chickens existed in abundance on his family farm (the family also had pigs and cows), but Eddie preferred chickens for several reasons. They would largely care for their own needs, reproduce themselves, provide a steady stream of eggs for consumption and marketing, and could be eaten when no longer fit for egg laying … an almost perfect product for any entrepreneur!

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from 216,000 to 1,362,000 and horses from 340,000 to 1,195,000. The number of hogs also rose, hitting 712,000 in 1911 (from 126,000 in 1901), as did sheep (285,000 from 183,000) and chickens (8,033,000 from 1,623,000).

[144] Whether Ralph loved his cow and wanted to name it after royalty or hated the King and wanted to name a future steak after him, his plan with his sister was to "crown him with roses on Coronation Day" and make the name official (Clench, 1902, p. 333).

Other 'unusual' choices (animals other than typical farm denizens) made by children when setting up their 'livestock' businesses included the forty ducks that Elsie Clench (1901) attempted to raise, thirty-four of which died due to a heavy rainfall (they were virtually battered to death) while others ate pea pods that later swelled up in their stomachs. Walter Brown (1902), a nine-year-old from Portage la Prairie, Manitoba tried raising pure-bred 'Toulouse' geese for their eggs, while Florence Griffiths (1902), an eleven year old from Yorkton, Saskatchewan cared for eighteen pigeons (potential roasted squabs).[145] However, the most unusual may have been the animals raised by John Fardoe (1902) of the Brandon, Manitoba area. This eleven-year-old boy raised rabbits (along with a calf). What made this out of the ordinary was the fact that rabbits were so abundant.[146] They were a regular source of food and easily trapped and as such, the thought of raising rabbits as a commodity would not seem to have been carefully thought out by John. However, several other children also reported raising rabbits for the market including Jennie Erickson (1902), a fourteen-year-old girl from Edberg, Alberta, an eleven-year-old boy named Clifford Earl (1902) from Swan Lake, Saskatchewan and fifteen-year-old Oliver Wright (1902) of Rose Hill, Manitoba. Only Oliver seemed to have prepared for adverse market conditions by diversifying his stock as in addition to his rabbits (that "live under the granary"), he had two cows, one calf and one pig of his own (Wright, 1902, p. 332).

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[145] The largest breeder of pigeons among the children referred to in the written memoirs and other documents was Alan Redfern (1902), a fourteen-year- old from Sandhurst, Manitoba. He indicated that he had twenty-five pigeons 'in stock' but had slaughtered and sold another twenty-five during the fall.

[146] For a more detailed discussion of the rabbit population see Chapter Six respecting the trapping of rabbits for consumption.

Among the children who wrote of their pride in caring for their livestock were others to whom the raising of animals was simply a practical venture. For example, ten-year-old Martin Henderson (1902, p. 506) of Alameda, Saskatchewan indicated that he liked "working the land… [but at a practical level] must be doing something to help pay for the feed my stock has to eat in the winter." He had a cow given to him by his father on his eighth birthday along with several other animals and enjoyed working them but Martin saw these animals as a professional farmer would. His personal pleasure over growing his own feed would not put food on the family table, only his labour would do that, and thus he did not become too attached to the farm's outputs.

These enterprises could generate reasonable amounts of money for those prepared to participate in the process but as shown by Bert MacPhail (1902), the children might not be the ones to benefit directly from their work. In his case, Bert and his sister had raised a steer from birth but when the sale was completed, the $12 sale price went straight to their mother. However, two other young entrepreneurs, Elmer Lockhart of Lidstone, Manitoba (1902), and Frederick Arnott of Calf Mountain, Manitoba (1902) were enterprising enough to retain and re-invest their early income in new ventures. Both chose pigs as their second money making venture, with Elmer using his wages from acting as the local school's early morning fire starter to buy his first hog and Frederick using money from a successful small-scale wheat crop to pay his father $1 for the piglet. As both chose assets that could reproduce and thus increase their numbers, the profit potential was large.

Unfortunately for some, animal husbandry as an entrepreneurial activity was not without risk. For example, Norman Moss (1902, p. 741) pointed out the dangers of the cold weather (it had been so cold in the spring that the calf his cow 'Rooney' birthed died of exposure in a late season snow storm). Eager (1953) noted that a prairie fire could kill animals or destroy stored hay, Watson (1975) indicated that coyotes and wolves could kill sheep and Christensen (1976, p. 19) referred to a disease called "blackleg" that could kill cattle.

3) Gopher Bounties and Trapping[147]

The third form of entrepreneurial activity among farming children involved hunting for animals that had some value in the market. Furs continued to be valuable but few children had the time or expertise to trap anything other than animals that might come near the homestead. As such, the activity that could provide the greatest cash return for the least amount of effort was hunting gophers to collect the bounty placed on the rodents by the federal government. The bounty was designed to encourage people to kill the animals and rid the prairies of a dangerous pest. They were hazardous for horses and livestock as a misstep into a gopher burrow could result in a broken leg. Further, gophers were primarily vegetarian and as such, the crops and gardens planted by settlers were a convenient source of nutrition for these social and populous irritants. As such, given the importance of the wheat export, "the Canadian government offered a bounty of one cent for each gopher tail turned in" as proof of the elimination of that animal (McLeod, 1977, p. 14).[148]

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[147] As noted earlier, Tables E and F of Appendix 2 confirm that gopher bounty hunting and fur trapping were primarily male activities and the results suggest that no age distinctions applied to this activity. The 3 girls involved in bounty hunting came from three different age groups while the boys were spread across four groups with 1 boy in the 6 to 8 age group and the remaining 15 in the 9-11, 12-14 and over 14 groups.

The children most interested in the gopher bounty quickly became quite expert in their executioner's role. Evelyn McLeod (1977) mentioned that her 'younger' cousins (she was six years old at the time) were great huntsmen.

> Usually they snared the gophers with a slipknot at the end of a length of binder-twine. After a gopher ran into his burrow, the loop was placed around the entrance to the hole and the boys flattened themselves about twelve feet back. In only a few minutes, they had their prize (McLeod, 1977, p. 14).

Similar action (using the string trap technique) was also mentioned by Wathen (1975) who indicated in an interview that he would go out for entire days on gopher hunts and return with enough tails to earn himself a quarter for his efforts. The string noose was also a favorite of the grandfather of Dorthea Calverley although this low technology methodology eliminated few of the pests. For more efficient kills, strychnine mixed with wheat was used as poisoned bait. After warning Dorthea not to use any of the mix for "prairie chewing gum" (a ball of chewed wheat converted to a rubbery texture) she was assigned to deposit the poison while on her rounds with her home-made wagon looking for buffalo chips (Calverley, 1985, p.32). The virtue of efficiency was also a part of George Cox's (1902) approach to the business of killing gophers. This ten year old from Pincher Creek, Alberta used a trap line in his quest for the gopher bounty, staking out likely territory on the family farm and spending the summer at his work. By the time he was done, 161 of the rodents, enough to fill a small prairie dog 'town', had fallen victim to his trapping technique.

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[148] Municipal governments on the prairies also became involved in efforts to eradicate these rodents. For example, the Municipality of Excelsior near Medicine Hat, Alberta sponsored a gopher hunt lasting from spring to mid-July, 1915. Approximately 15,000 tails were turned in to the

The string, trapping and poisoning techniques were not sporting enough for all gopher hunters. Members of George Still's family, for instance, used both guns and snares. As George wrote in a letter to the Free Press Prairie Farmer newspaper, he was out hunting with his "uncle Tom and [his] brother Jimmy" and " shot about 20, and snared some. We were hunting nearly all day. I like hunting; it is great sport" (Still, 1996). Others like a Mrs. Cameron were much more practical about the matter and simply "tumbled over a good many" gophers with a rifle to save their gardens (Turner, 1955, p. 53).

According to his published memoirs, James Minifie was also an enterprising fellow with an eye for money-making opportunities. Having earned

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municipality with the top five catchers having 6,984 kills recorded to their credit (Jones, 1987, p. 109) pocket money in England by hunting down house sparrows that ate seedlings and nested in rain gutters with his pellet rifle, the bounty of one cent per gopher became a natural source of income for James and his younger brother. However, these young entrepreneurs were not satisfied to adopt the habits of their predecessors in the gopher hunting field, having decided that the usual technique of putting a noose around a gopher hole and waiting for the occupant to stick its head up was far too slow. The Minifie brothers therefore developed what they thought would be a more efficient technique. They would pour water down a hole until a gopher left the burrow through an alternate entry point and rely on their collie, 'Scottie', to snap up the gopher. At that point, the boys would take over and as James noted "we stripped off their tails with a quick jerk, and packed them into an Old Chum tobacco sack of father's, which we carried on our persons until my mother objected" (Minifie, 1972, p. 103).[149]

Collecting on the government bounty required a trip to the local municipal office and this meant waiting for their money until there was a chance to go to town. At ten or twelve trophies per day, it did not take the boys long to develop sufficient savings to cover their spending needs. However, had they been able to add the efforts of the family cats to their hunting expeditions, or at least been able to rescue the gopher tails from consumption, they might also have developed larger deposit accounts at the local bank. As stated by James Minnifie, the cats were formidable hunters and every morning, each adult cat would capture and kill a gopher, drag it back across one half mile of broken fields, and share their bounty with the kittens playing in the family yard. This would have presented the best opportunity to intervene and rescue the tails but coming between a farmyard cat, its kittens, and breakfast may not have seemed worth the pennies to be earned. Of course, once the kittens were blooded and hunting on their own, the hunters would not return to the yard with their catch. As such, they became competitors for the same prey that the brothers pursued.[150]

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[149] As noted by Murray (1982, p. 45) in a privately published family history, not all children hunted gophers for profit. Murray had received a young gopher as a pet from his father. When it was killed accidentally his mother located a new gopher pet for him but after being bitten by the new pet, "she picked it up and took it to the door where she threw it just as far as she could. That was the end of the pet gopher era."

Beyond the tail bounty set for gophers, furs from beavers, foxes, minks, coyotes and wolves remained valuable commodities in the market. Demand was not as high as during the fur-trading era that was ended by the influx of settlers into the prairie region and the associated movement of animals further into the wild, but trapping did provide a source of cash for a few families that could not be ignored. Boys such as Roy DeVore (1970, p. 28) who, when he entered the prairies with his family, brought with him a "25 Stevens rifle… a single-gauge shotgun and a number of traps", set out trap lines during the winter months in the hope of generating large amounts of cash in the spring.

Trapping was somewhat easier at the Reesor (1977) homestead as the traps could be laid close to home. Piles of skinned carcasses of the cattle that had died during the winter were all dragged to a nearby ravine or coulee for disposal. The smell of fresh and rotting cattle attracted hoards of coyotes and wolves into the area to be shot or trapped. By laying traps on the most likely paths that could be followed to reach the carcasses, the odds of success for William's brothers were increased. Once the pelts were "stretched on boards shaped for the purpose", they could be sold to a hide buyer for a price set by quality and "a lot of dickering" while the hides of the dead cows could be sold by weight to bring in some cash to compensate for the loss of the cattle (Reesor, 1977, p. 5). Others concerned about the presence of such predators sometimes took more direct action by seeking out the dens of these animals, "crawling into the den wearing a miner's hat with the light in front, a piece of rope around the waist, a revolver and a gunny sack" (Reesor, 1977, p. 9). Whatever the reason for killing these animals, their fur represented potential profits for the family and hunters could thus serve their families in several ways. As noted by Lewis (1996, p. 9), "[young] hunters, fishers and trappers supplemented family larders with wild birds, fish, and game they shot or caught, and they contributed to family incomes from the profits of their traplines."[151]

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[150] One enterprising young girl, named Neen Barr had a different perspective on the best ways of earning money from the gopher bounty. "If she could cut off its tail, set her victim free to grow

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another, there could be no end to the revenue gophers could produce" (Pratt, 1996).

[151] For some children, their profits from their trapping skills could bring a bit more money into the family coffers. For example, in a letter written to the Free Press Prairie Farmer (1908), fourteen year old Ethel Place indicated that the family had received $50 from the sale of coyote and muskrat pelts that had been trapped on their homestead. Even small animals could generate some income. The pelt of a red squirrel was worth 15 cents, a gray squirrel was worth 10 cents, and the rarest breed, black squirrels, brought 25 cents each (Broadfoot, 1988, p. 138).

4) Sales of Fruit and Other Produce[152]

The fourth form of entrepreneurial labour performed by children provided some cash for the farm but also actively trained the children in gardening and harvesting techniques that would allow them to make maximum use of their physical environments. At the same time, this type of training and honing of their entrepreneurial skills could be enjoyable and provide adventures for the participants. For example, fruit picking expeditions to appropriate berry sites could include very young children as the work was not heavy or dangerous and between exploring new territory and eating their fill of fruit, the children would also be serving a need for the family. As reported by Maryanne Caswell (1968) to her grandmother in a letter written in 1887, a bushel of raspberries and a grain sack full of Saskatoon berries were easily obtainable by the six youngest children of the family. This activity was squeezed into the spare time during the course of a hectic day in which the family was traveling to deliver eggs to a farmer with no chickens, and to pick up their mail at the local post office. This efficient use of time to take care of personal matters while also promoting their business of selling foods was a hallmark of prairie settlers. There was little time to waste in a day if the farm was to remain in operation.

As reported by Rowles (1952), berry sales were an important part of the family income stream for the Neville family who farmed near Lumsden,

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[152] The few children who participated directly in produce sales (as opposed to those who assisted a parent) were at least 9 years old and the largest group (2 girls and 1 boy) was in the 'over 14' age

Saskatchewan in 1884. The family, already involved in direct sales of vegetables to the families of the North West Mounted Police officers stationed at Regina, also took advantage of the "great quantity and variety" of natural berries and fruit in the valleys near their homestead. The children and Mrs. Neville would locate and harvest the fruit and pack it into pails for their father to sell in Regina for up to two dollars (or its equivalent in bartered sugar, or tea) per pail (Rowles, 1952, p. 2). Additional processing of the fruit on the homestead allowed the family to charge more for their produce. As such, Mrs. Neville would sometimes take a portion of their raspberry harvest, some dried apples and a lot of sugar to create her own jam, a product that could be sold "to the C.P.R. for twenty-five cents a pound" (Rowles, 1952, pp. 2-3). The railway valued this access to fresh products so highly that they even supplied the pails for the family to use while picking berries and for storing the homemade jams.

Another farm child, fifteen-year-old Annie Penhall of Bear Creek, Manitoba was also successful as a vendor of natural fruits. She wrote of her excursions into the brush in search of fruits and berries, both for the family table and for selling to townspeople. While she did not note her profit level in her letter, she did indicate that she had "sold quite a lot of currents in town", suggesting that she was earning needed money for her family (Penhall, 1902, p. 829).

While most children revealed their preference for collecting and selling berries, one boy indicated that growing vegetables was his marketing choice. Ten-

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group (Tables E and F, Appendix 2).

year-old Alfred Jones (1902) was in the right place at the right time to obtain a job paying five cents chasing a neighbor's cattle away from his father's haystack but rather than squander his new found wealth, he turned it into investment capital and purchased part of a bag of onion seeds for his money. Establishing his own small garden, the onions were planted alongside other produce grown from seeds 'donated' by his parents such that when the growing season ended, he would have a broad assortment of vegetables to market in addition to a few acres of oats, wheat and barley that his father had planted in a separate area on his behalf. His ultimate goals were to obtain an air rifle and a pony, all margined from his original five cent job (and a bit of help from his father), revealing him to be a truly dedicated and ambitious child. By investing his money in diverse farm assets, he hoped to multiply his original capital as a means of achieving his goals.

5) Summary

As was the case with productive labour tasks, entrepreneurial activities were subject to some division along gender lines. For example, while it might appear that gender played no role in the decisions of boys and girls to seek out paid employment from the family perspective, the work they obtained was quite different as were their wages. Girls sought or received domestic positions with low wages while the boys were employed in construction or fieldwork and earned wages that were comparatively high.

Similarly, two other forms of entrepreneurial activity reported in the various memoirs, diaries and letters, hunting for gophers and marketable furs, and selling wild and domesticated fruits and vegetables, were also subject to gender influences. They were, however, opposites from a gender perspective. Only three girls indicated any involvement in hunting (and one simply put out poisoned bait and did not collect gopher tails for the government bounty) and only two boys raised money through the sale of fruits or vegetables (even though girls made it clear that it was easy work to collect and sell these items).

Out of all of the activities directed at raising funds for the family, only in one area, the raising of farm animals and poultry, was gender of limited influence. Both boys and girls owned cows, pigs, geese, chickens and other valuable stock that would eventually be sold for slaughter. In some cases, animals such as milk cows and chickens were chosen as they would provide a continuous return on the child's labour in the form of the milk and eggs they produced but ultimately, they were all destined for the table. This type of activity raised funds for use on the farm but would also have taught a lesson that was important for future farmers and farmers' wives to learn, animals on the farm were not pets, they were assets to be used as necessary to raise money that would improve the family's financial position.

CHAPTER SEVEN

SUBSISTENCE LABOUR

The purpose of this Chapter is to highlight the involvement of children in subsistence labour, the work undertaken to ensure the physical survival of the family. This work was vital as if the farm was to continue its day-to-day operations, the people and animals involved in the process had to receive the materials essential to life. Section one thus deals with labour directed at locating and hauling water for consumption, while section two focuses on the provision of the fuel necessary to cook meals, and heat the home. Sections Three, Four and Five discuss the labour expended by children to obtain the milk, eggs, meat, fish, fruit and vegetables required for the family's personal survival. Sections Six and Seven highlight the work associated with protecting the family and its assets from insects that could slow or limit the amount of work performed in operating the farm and from more deadly perils that could lead to injury, death, or destruction. Section eight concludes this Chapter by reviewing the findings including the influence of gender on the type of work executed by farm children in this labour sphere.[153]

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[153] The importance of subsistence labour to the entire family is emphasized by the fact that large numbers of both boys and girls contributed their efforts to the tasks making up this type of labour. As shown in Table K of Appendix 2, 62 girls and 53 boys tackled the various subsistence jobs. The types of work were quite varied and Tables G and H of Appendix 2 reveal that both genders took equal responsibility for obtaining water (17 girls and 18 boys), fuel (12 girls and 16 boys), and for protecting family members from insects and wildlife (3 girls and 2 boys). However, the 20 boys who took up hunting and fishing and the 12 boys who helped to fight fires outnumbered the 6

1. Obtaining Water[154]

One of the main goals when farming in the dry areas of the prairie region was to ensure that a steady supply of water was available to the farm and family. Children's labour was used freely to fulfill this need. Small supplies to be used while undertaking the work necessary to establish the farm could be obtained relatively easily but for use in an ongoing farm with the needs of the family, livestock and gardens to consider, the supply had to be extensive enough to fulfill all of the requirements without fail. It was also preferable that the water be clean enough that it did not have to be strained and boiled before being consumed as having to treat the water would add a further labour burden to settlers' lives. However, in the absence of a stream or river with water that moved too quickly for contaminants to accumulate, or a large lake relatively free of concentrated problems, potable water was rare.

The water that was available in the areas of the prairies that received more moisture was generally found in the numerous sloughs and ponds that dotted the landscape (Dawson and Younge, 1940). These reservoirs held stagnant water filled with plants, animals, birds, insects and their larvae and as such, water from these sources had to be filtered and boiled for esthetic, if not health reasons. For

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female hunters and 5 female firefighters substantially. Girls dominated the remaining activities of producing animal products for family consumption (52 girls and 37 boys), and gardening and harvesting wild plants (32 girls and 16 boys).

[154] The task of obtaining water for the family and sometimes for the livestock fell almost equally on both genders and Tables G and H of Appendix 2 reveal that the burden was also spread out over all of the children. Only 1 boy and 1girl in the 6 to 8 year old category reported obtaining water but between 4 and 7 boys and girls from each of the three older groups also noted this duty.

example, Mary Louisa Cummins (1975) related a story respecting her trip to the new family homestead near Grenfell, Saskatchewan in 1883. The hotel that they stayed at on the night before driving across country in a wagon to their homestead used a nearby pond for its drinking and bathing water. Mary refused to put her clean washing sponge into the water as it was "full of 'wigglies' since it had not been filtered or boiled before being delivered to their room" (Cummins, 1975, p. 30).

A number of similar stories were reported by individuals respecting their experiences with water in the region. Larson (u.d.), for example, indicated that in some areas, only slough water was available for drinking and when that was the case, precautions had to be taken to avoid illness and parasites. The precautions they did take were insufficient (they did not boil the water before drinking) but would have eliminated at least the larger sized pests from the drinking water. Their water purification system was based on dipping a handkerchief under the surface of the slough, folding the corners up to trap a pouch of water, pulling the pouch out of the slough, holding it overhead and then drinking the water as it leaked through the cloth. The bugs that would otherwise have been ingested remained in the pouch to be shaken out later.

Such filtering methods were also used by the family of Russell Braithwaite who homesteaded in the Yellowgrass, Saskatchewan area in the 1890s. They did not have a reliable well at the time and thus, whenever a storm passed through the area, the family had barrels out to catch as much water as possible. When the storms ended, the children were sent out with an empty barrel on a stone boat to gather as much additional water as they could before it soaked into the soil and was lost. The children would thus drag the barrel out to the fields looking for ditches and depressions that might hold a couple of gallons of water that could be salvaged. However, the water scooped up off the ground had "all kinds of red bugs in it" and these were eliminated by filtering the water through a flour sack stretched over the opening (Braithwaite, u.d., p. 1). As flour sacks had to hold finely ground powder, the mesh would likely have been tight enough to filter out the bugs and even particles of dirt. Thus, some sort of drinkable water could generally be found or created on the prairies but as with most other obstacles that had to be overcome, additional labour had to be expended on the solution.

Rodwell's (1965) analysis of government homestead records respecting the reasons settlers gave for abandoning their homesteads produced numerous examples of failures tied directly to such water issues. At one extreme, floods and extensive sloughs drove some settlers away from land that was "only fit for ducks", while at the other were homesteads with "no water to be found" (Rodwell, 1965, p. 13). Other typical comments found on homestead abandonment forms included driving cattle "4 or 5 miles to a watering place… [and traveling] 5 or 6 miles for drinking water", and the need to dig or drill wells to a depth of hundreds of feet before a reliable water source was tapped (Rodwell, 1965, pp. 13-14). One settler (who did not abandon his homestead) had a spring that ran through his homestead during the spring, summer and fall but in the winter when the spring froze, he was so desperate for water that he was forced to spend a great deal of valuable time melting snow (Stringer, 1888).[155]

Stories of families re-using the same water for cooking, bathing, washing clothes and scrubbing floors (in that order) were not an exaggeration in a region where every drop of water might have to be hauled over long distances (Jones, 1987). For example, Rowles' (1952, pp. 4-5) report of the results of a survey of pioneers indicated that almost one-third of the 217 respondents referred to hauling water in barrels for use on the homestead. Twenty-one had to haul the water more than one mile and one respondent was eleven miles from a source of reliable drinking water. Lucy Johnson's (u.d.) autobiography indicated that she and her father found themselves in a similar situation. They normally obtained barrels of water for their livestock from a nearby river but with the river running low during the summer, the two of them were forced to expend a lot more effort than usual. They scooped the water up in buckets from low spots in the riverbed and poured it into barrels for transport back to the farm.

For others, drinkable, if unpalatable, water was readily available but in such cases, the taste sometimes had to be hidden in some fashion. Blending in powdered ginger or drinking the water only when it was brewed with tea, coffee or a homemade substitute such as burnt toast or roasted barley and wheat, made it more palatable (Rowle, 1952). It reached the stage for the Pinder family that "tea made from tasteless water seemed flat" (Hiemstra, 1997).

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[155] For those who did not have streams and had to haul water in barrels on a wagon or stone boat, a settler named Larson gave advice that would prove wise. He indicated that people with oxen to pull their wagons should stop watering them before the trek was made. The thirsty oxen would then drink their fill while the barrels were filling, saving the need for water for the animals for a few

In the absence of a convenient natural source of drinkable water, many settlers undertook one of the most dangerous endeavors for inexperienced workers, the digging of a fresh-water well. Wells were deadly in a variety of ways as aside from the potential for the accumulation of lethal levels of noxious gases,[156] digging without a partner could allow a person to dig themselves into their own grave if an exit route was not planned (Minifie, 1972). Further, collapsing walls could bury the digger and accidents with explosives could endanger lives.

The latter problem stopped work at a neighbor's well on which Roy DeVore's father and fourteen-year-old brother, Hugh, were working. They were using dynamite to loosen the dirt in the well and on the day that they hit the 102 foot mark, three charges were set and triggered before the work crew quit for the evening. The following morning, the two DeVores were the first down the shaft and while digging, set off a charge that had not actually fired the night before and were left with severe injuries. The father's face was "swathed in bandages" and "the end of one thumb was blown off, two ribs were cracked and his face was filled with fine pieces of sandstone (DeVore, 1970, p. 49). Hugh had a superficial

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days. In effect, "this would be like taking two loads of water back, one load in the oxen and the other in the barrels' (Larson, u.d., p. 3).

[156] Jones (1987) relates the story of Nels and Nikolai Sokvitne, a pair of 'professional' well diggers on the prairies. Wells had to be deep to reach the water table in many areas and fouled air was a constant danger. The Sokvitnes solved this problem by lowering a candle down the well to see if it would stay alight but in the absence of a candle, they would send captured cats or roosters down the shaft before resuming digging.

leg wound, "an injured eye, both forearms penetrated by sandstone particles, while the right hand appeared to be shattered from the inside" (DeVore, 1870, p. 49). Luckily, neither of them was killed but the fact that a fourteen year old would be allowed to participate in such a dangerous operation suggests that children's labour was of importance on the frontier, that it was needed badly enough that parents would allow them to take on dangerous tasks, and that adult labour was in relatively short supply.

The brother of Lucy Johnson (u.d.) was also drafted into working on a well with their father, but this well was on their own property so they were risking their lives for their own benefit. The two took turns going down into the well to dig as there was not enough room for two to work at once. Eventually, they were deep enough after several days work for the use of a bucket to haul displaced dirt to the surface for disposal. The person out of the well had to pull the dirt out of the excavation and in addition, help the digger out of the well using the rope as they did not have a ladder long enough for the depth they had reached. One morning after completing the regular chores, Lucy's father volunteered to dig first and her brother was to join him at the well as soon as he finished eating lunch. However, rather than going to the well, the brother was distracted by the thought of a food shortage and decided to walk to Saskatoon (a five-day trip) for supplies. Luckily, he came to his senses within a few miles and got his father out of the well but with dust storms, unceasing farm work and an ambitious building program including a sod barn and a two story wood frame house, there was little time for recriminations, even over a deadly mistake.

After a well was completed, children often assumed the job of hauling water from the well to the house or barn depending on need. One enterprising young boy, twelve-year-old J. MacDonald (September, 1901, p. 597) of Polar Grove, Saskatchewan, developed a labour saving method of hauling water the three hundred feet from the well to their house. His 'Pointer' dog was used to pulling him on a sleigh in the winter and he adapted this so that the dog would pull a cart with a pail of water on board during the summer.

Of course, hauling water was not the only task assigned to children and when other jobs fit only for a child came up, the child had to perform no matter how distasteful the task. Thus Helen Koett, the older sister mentioned in the memoirs of Augustine Koett (u.d.), was called on to ride a bucket down into a well to remove another bucket stuck in the hole. The opening to the water at the bottom of the well had been shrinking all winter due to ice build up on the walls and when the first bucket was accidentally dropped, it hit at an angle and blocked access to their only source of water. Helen was small enough that when dressed warmly in a coat, hat and mittens, they believed that she would fit in a second bucket and still have enough room to move around and wiggle the stuck bucket loose so that the access could be re-opened. (The memoirs did not mention whether anyone had considered how they would get the child out if the second bucket also became stuck in the narrow opening). Helen was promised a quarter for doing the job and then placed in the bucket to be lowered into the hole but at that point, Augustine (u.d., p. 5) indicated that:

> Helen, who had that terrible experience at the camp [she ran across a board over a ground level well at a CNR construction camp and slid into the opening, barely hanging on to the edge of the board until rescued], was afraid of wells and screamed 'Mama, I'm choking, I can't get any air!' although she was still on top of the well. [When Augustine heard Helen screaming, she] ran to the well crying, 'Mama, Helen is dying, let me go down." Then mother took Helen out of the pail and put me in- without a coat, cap or mitts, and let me down. When I got down, I grabbed the pail from the hole with one hand and held onto the rope with the other, then mother pulled me up, pail and all. But I didn't get the quarter that had been promised Helen, nor did I ask for it. It was enough for me that I saved Helen's life, as I thought.

Not even finding water when digging a well necessarily meant the end of difficulties as wells had to be maintained for use and if not protected from wildlife, could become spoiled. For instance, Olive Lockhart, a seven-year-old British immigrant, living on a homestead near Saskatoon, Saskatchewan in 1908 mentioned in her memoirs that her father had struck drinking water when the well he was digging hit the eight-foot level. However, mice, frogs and other animals often found a way into the well and "one spring, the water tasted 'queer' so Father emptied the well, and found twenty-seven rabbits at the bottom of it" (Lockhart, 1978, p. 8). The dead animals were removed, saving the family from illness, but without a box built around the well to shift the opening above ground level, animals continued to find their way to the water.

2) Obtaining Fuel[157]

One other major concern for prairie residents was to secure a dependable source of fuel for both heating and cooking purposes but in some areas, this was a difficult process.[158] This was confirmed by Rodwell (1965) as his report on homestead abandonment indicated that one of the more frequent causes for leaving a homestead was the lack of buffalo chips, let alone the coal that the advertisements said could be easily found in the region.[159] This was not a concern for those in the more northern zone of black park soil where abundant tree cover existed, or for those in the southern light brown soil zone who farmed in proximity to surface deposits of coal near Estevan, Saskatchewan[160] or Lethbridge, Alberta. For the rest of the region, however, fuel was relatively scarce yet settlers had to have it for cooking and to maintain a livable temperature in the home during the winter.[161] As such, it was a priority item to be obtained whatever the cost in time, effort or money.

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[157] As was the case with child labour devoted to obtaining water, the task of obtaining fuel, whether coal, buffalo chips or wood, was spread across all age groups, in this case including even 1 boy and 1 girl less than six years old (Tables G and H, Appendix 2).

[158] Ensuring a sufficient supply of fuel was literally a matter of life and death on the prairies where temperature extremes could exceed safe levels for months at a time and many houses were poorly constructed. As noted by Amy Braithwaite (u.d., p. 2), the temperature could reach "50 or more below" zero Fahrenheit and "the houses were so cold a pail of water would freeze on the back of the stove in the night".

[159] The CPR brochure entitled The North West Farmer (1891, p. 28) extolled the virtues of coal deposits on the prairies, making it seem that fuel would never be a problem. Listing the several areas in which coal seams had been discovered, the advertisement noted that the coal had "been found at many points so conveniently situated as to appear almost as though specially designed by nature for distributing centers" but failing to mention that with the lack of suitable transportation in the west, the coal would only be of benefit to those who could access the mining areas lying near the American border.

[160] For example, the family of Kathleen Smith (u.d..) homesteaded near Weyburn, Saskatchewan and thus had access to as much coal as they could afford. A deposit of coal was close enough to the surface that a farmer only five miles from their location had started his own mine that supplied people in the area. Kathleen's father built a coal shed to the side of their house and for winter, filled this to the ceiling and then created a large pile of additional coal near the house that was buried in hay to keep it dry throughout the winter.

For some settlers, for instance Mr. K.J. Smith of Watertown, Saskatchewan, the lack of readily available fuel meant a trip of thirty-five miles to gather wood from the valley of Last Mountain Lake where the availability of water meant denser vegetation (Turner, 1955). For others, however, a degree of ingenuity and the help of a child were needed. Cora Montjoy tells of how her job as a three-year-old was to help her brothers search the rail line that ran near their home in the Weyburn, Saskatchewan area for pieces of coal that might have fallen from the trains as the crew stoked the boiler fires for their engines. She was convinced "the trainmen spilled a bit" when they saw the children gathering the pieces of coal to take home (Montjoy, 1901, p. 2).

Dorthea Calverley (1985) who homesteaded near Swift Current, Saskatchewan at the turn of the century was also assigned to the task of gathering fire materials as a child. However, she found this to be a difficult task given the lack of trees and brush in the area. Their fuel problem was eventually solved when a new family homesteaded in the area in 1906. Although new to the prairies, the newcomers had learned about the use of buffalo chips for cooking and heating[162] and shared the knowledge with Dorthea's grandmother. Soon after, collecting chips became Dorthea's chore.[163] In her memoirs, she indicated that her grandfather:

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[161] Mary Cummins (1975, p. 31) noted that when her family first immigrated to Grenfell, Saskatchewan in 1883, "there was plenty of small dry timber scattered around the prairies in those days. To keep it dry it was piled like an Indian teepee." Once the loose wood was scavenged, the Cummins family had to travel to the Qu'Appelle River Valley for wood but it was relatively near their homestead.

[162] Gladys Holmes (u.d.) noted that in her home, the stove was likely to be fueled with 'prairie chips' as they burned hot and clean.

> made a light cart out of a wooden apple box which I pulled by a string. On it he fixed four wheels, made out of syrup pail lids. He also fashioned a long handled wooden paddle. Under my mosquito-netting anti-insect ankle-length tent, with slits cut out for hand-holes, I sallied forth to keep the homefires burning. Old dry flops were paddled into the wagon. There were very many of them for we were on the old trail from ranch to railway siding. When there had been a rain, the carboniferous, plate-sized objects were raised with the paddle, turned over to dry, and be 'harvested' later for the coal bucket beside the kitchen stove. Grandma was sympathetic enough to my squeamishness not to make me lift them by hand, for she herself also used two sticks as tongs. Sometimes they didn't quite make the transfer intact. Grandma's lips would tighten ominously… [and] grandfather made several trips to the railway for more discarded 'ties' (Calverley, 1985, pp. 22-23).

A similar story was related by Vivian Russo (1984) who had also been assigned to chip collection duty. She was ten years old in 1915 and living in southern Alberta on the family homestead. As she described the situation:

> Down near that Montana border it was very flat. It was a long way to get any coal, sort of barren; no wood around so we used to hire a stoneboat… and go out and pick buffalo chips…. You went out and when they were dry you picked them up, and if they weren't dry you turned them over and went back. It makes wonderful fires, and it's clean. When it was dry, there was no

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[163] It should be noted that any type of herbivore 'chip' could be used to fuel the fire. The key was that a high concentration of undigested foliage be contained in the 'chip'. Buffalo had been effectively extinct for decades and as such, children like Dorthea were actually hunting for 'chips' left primarily by cattle as they foraged across the prairie. However, Minifie (1972, p. 96) noted that "dry horse-droppings, weathered silvery grey over the winter", could also be used to feed a fire.

> smell. My uncle had a lean-to with a sliding door into the kitchen, and stored them all there (Silverman, 1984, p. 16).

While the use of chips as a primary fuel seems unlikely given their size, Russo noted that three chips set on fire in a stove would be sufficient to make a hot fire suitable for baking bread.[164]

Unfortunately neither the chips so dutifully collected, railway ties that had been appropriated for fuel, or the scraps of coal gathered from the railway right-of-way, could satisfy the needs of a family throughout a winter. Further, as trees were almost non-existent in much of the southern plains area, coal was the only other potential source of warmth during the bitterly cold winters. Dorthea Calverley (1985), speaking of the 1906-07 winter, made this point clear when she told the story of a strike at the Alberta and British Columbia coal mines. This work stoppage had ended deliveries of vital fuel to the Swift Current area and the area residents felt compelled to enter into a mass criminal conspiracy to save lives. Thus, railway workers and "every able-bodied man in town including the policeman and the preachers" worked together to steal a load of special high-grade coal that was being shipped east for study and by the end of the night, every house in the area that needed fuel had a supply hidden on their property (Calverley, 1985, p. 38). Coal shipments from the mines resumed shortly afterwards but every town resident and farm family in the area became a criminal that night although "nothing ever came of it" (Calverley, 1985, p. 38).

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[164] Girls were not the only children assigned to fuel duties. John Watson (1975), born in 1900 in Scotland, immigrated to a farm near Calgary with his parents in 1904 and proved to be an adaptable worker. He handled cattle and assisting in gathering firewood and buffalo chips at age four when coal was not available (wagon loads of coal had to be purchased at a mine and such cross-country trips were a lower priority than necessary farm work). A similar story was told by Harry Wathen (1975) who began his childhood duties on the family homestead near Okotoks, Alberta by gathering firewood and shoveling coal for the stoves when he was seven. However, Harry indicated that by the age of fourteen, boys were expected to have moved on to performing serious farm jobs such as driving wagons, plowing the fields and taking part in cropping activities such as harvesting the oats and barley that they grew.

Although few children reported being involved in felling trees for use as firewood, likely because of the danger that the job posed or their lack of the physical strength that was required, they were involved in processing the logs into useable form. While this task would seem to have been one that would require the strength of an older child, boys as young as ten-year-old George Cox (1902) reported being involved with cutting logs into a size that would fit into the family stove. In George's case, he indicated that he spent each Saturday cutting wood but others were not as specific as to the amount of labour devoted to this job. For instance, a twelve-year-old boy from Kinsmore, Manitoba named Wesley Barr (1902, p. 740) noted that he "cut most of the wood" used by the family. Similarly, eleven-year-old Clifford Earl (1902) mentioned cutting up wood for two family stoves and Ralph Clench (1902) indicated that he helped his father cut 'green' wood in the summertime, presumably so that it would have some time to dry before being used in the cold season.[165] However, if necessity required that the wood be used before it had a chance to dry out, this was done as the heat that it could provide was more important than worrying about the wood burning unevenly, excessive smoke or having to deal with more popping and gas explosions than usual. This was the situation for the family of Viola Cameron (1975) as their wood was delivered by an uncle from time to time over the course of the year. (They were not able to develop their own woodpile due to a lack of trees on their property and they were grateful for any wood they would receive even if it was green.) Viola would cut the wood into stove size pieces when her uncle arrived with a sleigh load of eight inch round poplar logs. She would "put the green wood up on the sawhorse and saw it" with "an old Swedish saw" and then would haul wood into the house to replenish their supply (Cameron, 1975, p. 10).

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[165] A different pattern seems to have been followed by fifteen-year-old E.O. Wright (September, 1901, p. 568) of Rose Hill, Manitoba as he reported that he would "chop the house wood" as needed

Once logs were cut into the proper size, any child could be assigned to haul the wood into the house so that the wood box would always be kept full. For example, Gordon Frook (1901), a ten-year-old boy from Burnside, Manitoba indicated that this was one of his regular duties. The same instructions applied to an eleven-year-old girl named Florence Griffiths (1902) from Yorkton, Saskatchewan. Eight-year-old Eddie Northey (1902) of Holland, Manitoba, seven-year-old Winnifred Hunt (1902) and four-year-old Verne Hunt (1902), were also involved in hauling wood into the house, suggesting that this task at least was not assigned on the basis of the sex or age of the child providing the labour.

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during the summer. He did not mention when he would begin to chop wood for a winter stockpile but presumably a wood supply was built up before winter for safety sake.

3) *Animal Products*[166]

Based upon the materials reviewed in Chapter Five respecting children's productive labour, it is evident that many family farms in the prairie region possessed a range of animals and poultry that would be sold on the market. However, at the same time, animals and poultry were also kept by the farm families for personal consumption and for their products such as milk and eggs.[167] As with the sale animals, children were made responsible for watering, feeding, milking, collecting eggs and cleaning up after the family herd and flock.[168]

This was more difficult for some children than others as in many cases, neither the settlers nor their children had experience in this type of labour and as such, had to learn from problems as they presented themselves. For instance, as discussed in the memoir written by Mary Waddell (u.d.), no member of her family had participated in farming endeavors of any kind prior to immigrating to Canada in 1909. Thus, when they acquired a milking cow for the family, no one knew anything about milking or caring for the animal. Mary proved to be the only one not frightened by the cow and as such, she was assigned the milking chores. In addition, given the family's lack of experience, they had not purchased a cream separator. However, Mary improvised and left the milk in a flat basin each night, skimmed off the cream each morning and put it in a sealer jar. When enough cream was accumulated, Mary would shake the jar to make butter for the family.

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[166] In the case of performing tasks associated with producing food such as milk, butter, cream, eggs and meat for the table, a clear age distinction may be seen in the data contained in Tables G and H of Appendix 2. Only 4 girls and 3 boys in the 6 to 8 year old group took part in this work but this jumped to 21 girls and 18 boys in the 9 to 11 group and 23 girls and 14 boys between 12 and 14 years of age. Four girls over 14 also worked on this job as opposed to only 2 boys.

[167] Almost every child whose writings were reviewed indicated that the family, or the child personally, kept animals for food.

[168] Comments on each aspect of animal care have been recorded by numerous children assigned to these tasks including eleven-year-old Hugh McIver (1902) of Virden, Manitoba who reported waking at 5:00 a.m. to care for the family's horses and cattle. He noted providing water, straw and grain for the animals and cleaning the stable area. Such stable chores were also mentioned by W.E. McIntyre (1902), Elmer Lockhart (1902) and Ambrose Dowkes (1902) who, at seven years of age, was the youngest boy to mention assisting his father with handling stable chores on their farm near Meridian, Saskatchewan.

A similar situation was reported by Lucy Johnson (u.d.). She indicated that when her family was in England, no member of her family had spent time on a farm. Thus, when her father bought a cow after arriving at their homestead near Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, every member of the family was tested to see who had the ability to deal with milking. Since "can't milk means no milk", they all soon learned how the system worked (Johnson, u.d., p. 36). However, as her father believed milking was a girl's job,[169] Lucy soon became the family 'milkmaid' but she noted in her memoir that:

> I was secretly pleased at this arrangement because I disliked washing dishes, and just as soon as mother started to wash dishes in the evening, I grabbed the milk pail, saying as I went out… 'father likes the cow milked at the same time every night'. This always worked because we had supper at the same time every night (Johnson, u.d., p. 36).

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[169] Milking was also assigned to Eva Clyde (1901), a young girl from Miniota, Manitoba. She had two cows to milk, Star and Beauty, and both were good natured. However, Eva expressed some impatience and indicated that while she "thought it [was] cruel to hit a cow with the stool or a stick whenever she moves… [Eva] was provoked when she sometimes puts her foot in the pail or upsets it" (Clyde, 1901, p. 569).

Numerous other children in the prairie region also received the task of dealing with the family cows and poultry.[170] Literally dozens of girls and boys mentioned milking cows, separating the cream and churning butter as one of their daily duties including eleven-year-old Marion Turner (1902) from Carroll, Manitoba and twelve-year-old Eva Cox (1902) of Pincher Creek, Alberta who milked four cows on a daily basis. Typical of the boys involved in performing this work for the family were eleven-year-old George Smith (1902) of Alexander Manitoba and Norman Moss (1902) of Shepard, Alberta, an eleven-year-old who milked three cows after locating them and herding them to the barn each day.[171]

Caring for the family's chickens and collecting the eggs they laid was also a job commonly assigned to children as evidenced by the large number of boys and girls who reported involvement. For example, Stanley Taylor (1902) of Neepawa, Manitoba reported taking care of nine chickens while eleven-year-old Florence Griffiths (1902) of Yorkton, Saskatchewan was responsible for taking care of ten chickens and gathering their eggs. Edna MacPhail (1902) a ten-year-old girl from Belmont, Manitoba indicated that she had 25 hens, B.A. Moss (1902, p. 332), a nine-year-old girl from Shepard, Alberta fed the hens and collected "a lot of eggs",[172] and twelve-year-old Alice Campbell (1902) from Pomeroy, Manitoba collected eggs from 25 hens and also cared for 5 turkeys and 3 roosters.[173]

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[170] While information concerning children working with pigs was less prevalent than that for cows and poultry, some children were tasked with their care. For example, fourteen-year-old Clarence Vance (1902) of Brandon, Manitoba had the job of looking after the farm animals, including the pigs. This chore was relatively light as he only fed them once a day (before his own breakfast) but he was also responsible for several cows, horses and even the chickens. Caring for the pigs was also a secondary job for Gertie Anderson (1902) of Lenore, Alberta as the ten year old primarily performed housework.

[171] While each of these young milkers also worked to process the product, others such as Selena Tucker (1902) who owned her own milk cow were also called upon to assist. Thus, while eleven-

Aside from milk cows and laying hens, other animals on the farms were kept for slaughter. While chickens and turkeys could be eaten in a single meal, the slaughter of pigs, cattle, sheep and goats had to wait until the fall or winter when the natural cold would preserve them for a longer period of time.[174] For example, Sue Harrigan (1980) reported in her memoir that her family would eat fresh meat in the late fall and much of the winter but as warm weather approached, the remaining pork and beef had to be cured or canned if it was not to be wasted. In her household, Sue was responsible for curing the pork by covering it in a mixture of saltpeter, brown sugar, salt and pepper until the meat was permeated. As for the beef, it had to be marinated in salt brine before being sealed into jars. Unfortunately, learning the process was expensive for the family as Sue, not knowing that salt could kill pigs, put the used beef brine into the pail used to water their hogs and one sow died when she drank the mixture.

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year-old Selena churned the cream from her cow to make butter, she also worked with the cream from the rest of the cows on the homestead near Margaret, Manitoba.

[172] It was interesting to note that B.A. Moss had two other sisters and one brother who also worked with the chickens. As all four siblings were trained to feed the flock, gather the eggs and clean out the coop, there would always be at least one child available to handle this work if the others were busy with different tasks.

[173] Other children also indicated having chicken responsibilities such as fourteen-year-old Florence Rayner (1902) from Elm Valley, Manitoba, ten-year-old Lillian Williamson (1902) from Regina, Saskatchewan and eleven-year-old Albert Wright (1902) from Rose Hill, Manitoba.

[174] As noted by Harrigan (1980), even with freezing to preserve the meat, cattle were too large for some families to consume over a single season. Thus, some families established cooperative food systems in which several families would receive meat from a single slaughtered animal. One family would provide the meat for the 'beef ring' and in this way, the meat would not be wasted even though "no one had a refrigerator and freezers were unheard of" (Thomson, 1979, p. 2).

4) Hunting and Fishing[175]

Another one of the chores often assigned to the children of a family was the hunt for small game suitable for the family stewpot or roaster.[176] One child who took his charge very seriously was John Wood (1976), the eight-year-old son of American immigrants who came to Canada at the turn of the century.[177] Despite his young age, John was prepared to handle his part of the workload and when he spotted a flock of geese in a nearby field, he went in search of a gun:

> Running to the house he got… [a] ten gauge double barrel shot gun and one shell was all he could find. He shot at the geese and they flew into another field a short distance away. Running to the Logan store he got more shells and crawling through the field he braced his gun on a fence post and let fire. He killed three. They were so heavy he had to fetch… [his] mother from the house to help him carry them…mother was overjoyed with her little hunter, but… much to her dismay found they were banded. John had shot Mrs. Cookson's geese! Confession was made and…dad paid the bill (Wood, 1976, p. 2).

The brothers of fourteen-year-old Maryanne Caswell (1968, p. 14) were more efficient in their goose hunt according to her published letters, avoiding the privately banded birds and bringing home three geese that "looked like an order of priests with their black collars and cowls". Similarly, the brother of Nellie Hislop bagged prairie chickens[178] with no difficulty and could kill two or three ducks with a single shot if they were swimming in formation (Nuffield, 1987).[179] When not hunting ducks or prairie chickens, young Mr. Hislop was searching for duck eggs in the trees near water sources to incubate on the farm for the purpose of raising domesticated water fowl for future consumption.

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[175] As noted earlier, hunting and fishing were largely male pursuits. While 6 boys in the 9 to 11 age group and 9 in the 12 to 14 group took part, 2 boys in the 6 to 8 grouping and 3 who were over 14 also contributed (Tables G and H, Appendix 2).

[176] Large game was quite rare as the native peoples in the area tended to rely on elk, moose and deer after their previous mainstay, the buffalo, were hunted almost to extinction by those seeking hides (Doolittle, 1978).

[177] As a side note, the family had traveled by colonist car to Wetaskiwin, Alberta and from there, by wagon to Tofield, Alberta. The Town of Tofield was in fact built on the half-section of land that

An interesting tale respecting the use of birds as a source of food was conveyed by Augustine Koett (u.d.) who indicated that she and her sister Helen would use a box full of oats as a lure for blackbirds. Once a bird had entered the box, Helen climbed in as well while Augustine held an old cape over the opening to prevent escapes. When enough birds were captured, they were taken to the mother for preparation as fried blackbird, a peculiar but life-sustaining dish that the family could acquire despite their lack of money. When blackbirds were not captured and fried for lunch, their brothers would scold the two girls for being too lazy to set up a good meal for them to eat.[180]

John Wood's father Henry purchased for $5 per acre on their move from the United States (Wood, 1976).

[178] Although there was some indication that that prairie residents frowned on the eating of prairie chickens , Roy DeVore discussed the fact that "prairie chicken, bush partridges and 'fool-hens' were plentiful... [and provided] plenty of fresh meat for a few days" (DeVore, 1970, pp. 35, 30).

[179] Although ducks were smaller than geese and thus provided less food value, they also offered a different taste for those tired of standard fair. Christensen (1976) reported hunting ducks which were easy to locate and hunt given the number that frequented his family farm in the summer.

[180] While the Hislop family was not in such desperate financial straits as the Koetts, Nellie's brother was prepared to kill anything that flew and since he knew the rhyme about the four and twenty blackbirds, he decided to hunt down enough birds for a pie. Unfortunately, he conducted his hunt with his two smaller sisters looking on, and when he used a shotgun on twelve birds, the girls were shocked by the many small bloody pieces of blackbird that had landed throughout the farmyard. Despite the 'four and twenty blackbirds baked in a pie' defense that he tried to use on his furious

It should be noted that boys, while in the majority of hunters, did not have an exclusive franchise on the ability to shoot. A fourteen-year-old girl from Glenboro, Manitoba named Annie Marsh (1902) was also quite proficient even though she spent most of her time working in the house. She managed to obtain a goose for supper one day using only a single shot from her rifle. Another girl who was not reluctant to shoot was Leddie Wilson (1902) of Circus Coulee, Alberta. She wrote to her sister in November, 1902, to tell her that she and her family had shot seventeen prairie chickens in less than two hours. Her letter went on to describe the culinary qualities of prairie chickens, including the comment that these birds were "plump and tender" and did not have a pronounced 'wild' taste to them (Wilson, 1902, p. 2). However, not all girls proved to be great, or even mediocre hunters. Mary Hiemstra (1997) for example went hunting with her father but given her lack of skill, she was put in charge of the evening's transportation chores. The 'gully' where the local farmers hunted was some distance from their homestead and Mary's job was thus of some importance but she failed in her task due to impatience and a lack of perseverance, and left her father stranded. As Mary described her shameful conduct:

> Going to the gully was fun, but when Dad left me with the team my troubles began. The mosquitoes came in clouds, and the horses got so restless I finally decided to go home. Dad got two mallards, but he had to walk all the way home,

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mother, she explained to him that it had been a poor idea and that he should stick to fruit for his pies from then on (Nuffield, 1987).

> about two miles, through a mist of mosquitoes (Hiemstra, 1997, p. 164).

The proficiency of the Minifie boys in hunting gophers (as was discussed in an earlier Chapter) also assisted the family diet. Fresh meat was a rarity without refrigeration but gophers caught, skinned, disemboweled and cooked the same day filled that gap in their diet. Feasting on gopher continued even after the family discovered that other settlers considered gophers as repulsive as rats on the menu. They had found that the rodents tasted like rabbit and could see no reason to forsake this manna from nature (Minifie, 1972). However, during years of drought or crop failure, attitudes toward eating gophers changed quite dramatically. As noted by Clarence Zeller in response to a questionnaire distributed by the Saskatchewan Archives Board, life on the frontier was either "feast or famine". In one particularly tough year, the community picnic that usually sported lemonade, sandwiches, cake, salads and fried chicken was somewhat limited instead. With the food shortage, they "all brought gopher's fried hind legs" (Morgan, 1965, p. 49).

While hunting was a common pastime for young people in the west, guile rather than guns, was also used to fill the supper pot. For example, G.F. Chipman wrote of visits to the houses of his pupils where he would spot the mechanisms used in rabbit hunts. Rabbit pits were dug relatively close to the home and were cunningly covered with hay. Some turnips or cabbage leaves were thrown in the middle for bait, and when the unsuspecting rabbit went foraging, he fell through the hay and twigs into the pit, where he was hailed with joy on the following morning. Soon his flesh was stewing in the pot for dinner (Chipman, 1969). While Chipman did not note the degree of success that his pupils enjoyed with their rabbit traps, other families utilizing the same methods reported anywhere from seven to fifteen rabbits being taken on some nights (Lippert, 1981). This would have represented a bountiful harvest of free food and might make the difference between survival and starvation.

Similarly, fish located in the lakes, rivers and streams of the prairies could also help to fill the food needs of settler families. As reported by a twelve-year-old girl named Ida McConnell (1902) from Hamiota, Manitoba, news that a lake was filled with fish could inspire immediate trips to the local fishing hole. Ida, for example, quickly gathered her fishing equipment and set out to harvest as many fish as possible. Her gear consisted of nets rather than fishing line to ensure that she did not allow any fish to escape.[181]

Such an approach was also advocated by Aaron Biehn (u.d.) who lived in the Humboldt, Saskatchewan area in the early 1900s. A creek near his family's homestead that emptied into a nearby lake was reported to be teeming with fish. Rather than treating the hunt as a means of relaxation with a fishing pole, Aaron and his father took nets to the creek and trapped every fish they could find. On a different day, they drove their wagon into a deep section of the creek, opened the back and allowed the fish to swim straight into their hands. A net at the back of the wagon prevented the fish from swimming back out of the box and when the wagon was full, they drove out and hauled the fish home to be processed into canning jars for future use. The fish were thus harvested as effectively as grain rather than being treated as a sporting opportunity, and thus, thanks to the labour of Aaron and his father, helped the Biehn family to achieve its goal of increasing the variety of their stockpile of preserved foods.

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[181] DeVore (1970, p. 35) extolled the abundance of "trout, grayling and suckers" in the Raven River that ran near his family homestead as a source of fresh food and new flavours.

5) Gardening and Harvesting Wild Fruits and Vegetables[182]

As in all other areas of subsistence labour, children contributed their efforts to a mainstay of the family food supply, its gardens and the collection of wild fruits and edible plants. Fresh and preserved vegetables provided variety in settler meals, and the occasional canned fruit or jam would have added an element of 'luxury' to their lifestyle.

With respect to the specific duties performed by settler's children in providing vegetables for the family table, Delia Bigelow Woolf (1974) dealt with this topic in some detail and covered the types of work that she, her siblings and her mother performed on a regular basis on their family farm near Cardston, Alberta. In terms of gardening work, Delia indicated that she and her siblings were involved in helping their mother tend the family garden. A variety of basic vegetables such as carrots, beets, peas and potatoes and other vegetables were grown with the children working to ensure that plants were watered, weeds pulled[183] and insects killed if found. When the garden was harvested, the crop was carefully stored in the produce cellar over the winter (Woolf, 1974).[184]

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[182] While less exciting than hunting or fishing, growing fresh produce and harvesting wild plants also contributed to the family larder. Once again, more girls over 8 years of age tended to perform this labour although 1 girl and 2 boys in the 6 to 8 age group did note their participation (Tables G and H, Appendix 2). However, for both girls and boys, it was the children in the 12 to 14 year age

The decisions as to which plants would be grown in the family garden was a personal one and a great deal of variety could be expected among different individuals. For example, Charlie McLeod (1902) indicated that the garden on their family homestead near Virden, Manitoba contained carrots, peas, potatoes (an entire acre of ground was devoted to this dietary staple) plus beans, radish, onions, cabbage, cucumbers, tomatoes, pumpkins and citrons. In addition, they had planted a cherry tree and transplanted wild fruit to their patch including red, white

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groups that provided most of the workers (18 girls and 9 boys) as opposed to 10 girls and 5 boys from the 9 to 11 grouping and 3 girls and no boys from the over 14s.

[183] The weeding of the garden appears to have been one task consistently assigned to children, possibly because of its simplicity. In any case, numerous children mentioned weeding duty including fourteen-year-old Alice Lyons (1902) of Montgomery, Saskatchewan who noted that she was out of bed at 6:00 a.m. each day to milk the family cows and then filled the rest of her schedule with weeding, baking, cooking meals, washing and ironing clothes and performing other housework until it was time for the cow's evening milking. A similar schedule, complete with weeding of the family garden, was also reported by a ten-year-old boy named Raymond Roff (1902) from Plum Coulee, Manitoba and by A. Kirk (1902) of Portage la Prairie. Of course, not all children were good at their tasks as evidenced by the admission of Ruby Stewart (1902, p. 1020), an eleven-year-old girl from Brandon, Manitoba. She indicated that her own garden was not "weeded out good and things in it do not get on very well."

[184] For those who did not dig their root cellar deep enough or could not keep it warm enough to avoid freezing the stored vegetables, potatoes, carrots, beets and most other items would be ruined by the cold. Olive Lockhart (1978) suggested that only turnips would survive a night of freezing and remain edible. If defrosted, they would turn to mush but if cooked while frozen, the vegetables could be used for animal feed. However, Kenneth Doolittle (1978) indicated in his memoirs that his family found a common-sense solution to the problem of vegetables freezing in the pioneer's root cellars. On the colder nights when they could not count on the stove to keep the house warm, a coal oil lamp could be placed in the cellar on a low flame and this would maintain a warm environment for the food.

and black currants, gooseberries and cranberries. The garden was thus similar to but more extensive than that of the Woolf family. Similarly, Vernon Bassett (1902) of Glenlyon, Manitoba indicated that carrots, peas, potatoes, beans, onions, tomatoes, cauliflower and parsnips were planted in the main garden but that berry plants and rhubarb had been established as well. Elmer Lockhart (1902) of Lidstone, Manitoba was also quite ambitious with his garden planting as he noted that he was growing carrots, peas, beets, potatoes, beans, radish, onions, cabbage, cucumbers, tomatoes, cauliflower, parsnips, pumpkins and citrons but in addition, also had spinach, lettuce, celery, squash, corn and turnips in the vegetable garden. Rhubarb and various berries were planted in a fruit section.

While many children reported being assigned to gardening work and most seemed to enjoy the labour, only one revealed a true expertise with growing plants. This young girl, Elizabeth Ebbern (1901) of Balmerino, Manitoba, provided a detailed description of one aspect of her garden set-up, her special cucumber patch. She stated that she prepared the seed bed with crushed soil mixed with rotted manure for vitality and ashes for protection from insects.[185] The technique that marked her efforts as special, however, was her automatic fertilizing system created out of an old barrel. The barrel was filled with rotted manure and placed on a raised area in the center of the seedbed. Elizabeth would pour water through the manure and nutrient-rich water would leak from the barrel and flow down to the plants. Presumably, this also worked automatically when it rained. As Elizabeth described it, her system helped "to invigorate the plants which are very strong and the way they grow is astonishing" (Ebbern, 1901, p. 597).

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[185] Those who could not protect their gardens from insects such as cutworms had little chance of harvesting a decent crop. An anonymous young girl discussed this topic in a letter submitted to the Nor'-West Farmer (1901, p. 597) and indicated that even though she had planted a very large garden, "the grub seemed to play 'havoc' with it" and little was produced for consumption over the winter.

The early fall was the time for harvesting the family garden but before work with the vegetables began, the harvest of ripened wild fruits had to be completed. Thus, Delia Woolf reported that one of her earliest memories of work was going with the other children on berry picking expeditions. They had to cross a river on their ranch and then pick "strawberries, serviceberries, gooseberries and wild raspberries" from an area with "acres of bushes" (Woolf, 1974, p. 9). Huckleberries were a rarer commodity but overnight trips to the nearby mountains provided enough of this fruit to make the travel worthwhile and the preserved fruits made it possible to cook wild berry pies year round (Woolf, 1974).

Gathering and growing food, particularly berries, were also the most common forms of subsistence labour performed by Elmer Spackman as a young boy after his family entered the prairie region in 1902. To the Spackmans, natural foods cost nothing but effort and could provide both variety and freshness to an otherwise mundane diet. When they first entered the area, the Spackmans planted the fruit plants they had brought with them from Utah[186] but until the plants matured, they had to purchase dried apples and prunes for eating, referring derisively to prunes as "Canadian strawberries" (1975, p. 17). These dried rations were supplemented by crab apples, chokecherries and saskatoons that Elmer gathered from bushes near a river.

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[186] What could be found in the wild was also often imported into family gardens as gooseberries, red and black currants and raspberries would all grow well in the prairie climate (Myer, u.d.). The transplanted berry plants, receiving regular watering and fertilizer, could also outperform their wild cousins and supply fruit without the long trek into the country (Dinsmore, 1901). Fourteen-year-old Maryanne Caswell (1968) was also involved with transplanting several plants but unlike the berries

The chore of gathering a supply of berries large enough for the entire family was also reviewed by Evelyn Mcleod (1977) in her memoirs. She stated that:

> Wild berries were plentiful. Strawberries were to be had in season by the dishpan-full, provided one didn't mind crawling around the low hillsides in the hot sun and we children came in handy for this little job (McLeod, 1977, p. 16).

Other young girls such as Alice Campbell (1902) from Pomeroy , Manitoba and Mabel White (1902, p. 740), an eleven-year-old from St. Charles, Manitoba were also responsible for locating and collecting wild "plums, cherries, black cherries, gooseberries, saskatoons, raspberries and haws" that grew close enough to their homesteads.

Wild fruits were a source of nutrients but were also important because of the change that they allowed in the day-to-day diet of the typical settler. The individuals and families that embarked on journeys into the wild to establish their own farms did not have a great deal of cash to spare on unnecessary items, a

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mentioned above, the roots for these rhubarb, current, strawberry and iris plants had been transported across the country when the family moved to the west.

standard 'grub stake'[187] was made up of fairly basic, durable and transportable food.[188] These supplies were generally bland and wild berries and other plants could help to cure this deficiency.[189] In short, the labour of children devoted to food acquisition helped to make the prospect of farming in the prairie region more appealing while fulfilling the food requirements of the family.[190]

6) Protection of the Family from Insects and Other Animal Life[191]

While the creation of an infrastructure of buildings, fences, fields and necessary supplies such as water, fuel and food was vital to establishing a viable family farm, protecting what had been built was equally important as no operation could otherwise remain viable. Among the more important duties of all family members was the necessity of devoting as much time as possible to ensuring the safety of the food supply and the members of the family. Protecting the crops and gardens from pests meant that traps, guns, poison and other protective measures were as common as rabbits, gophers, cutworms and grasshoppers.

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[187] The term 'grub stake ' was used by Isabel and Betty McNaught to describe the basic food supply people would purchase each winter from the general store in Edson, Alberta. A grub stake would last a family for one year and cost approximately $300 in 1912 (McNaught, 1976).

[188] Isabel and Betty McNaught (1976, p. 6) described the food their family had purchased as:

> everything that would swell as much food as possible for the poundage…all by the case, wholesale by the case. Dried fruits, they got prunes and plums and apples and rice and tapioca and sego, Horrible stuff, and beans and oatmeal and sugar.

In other words, the frontier food mix contained a large amount of dehydrated foods that would become edible when water was added and while this reduced the amount to be hauled, it did not allow for much variety.

[189] Bertha Myer (u.d., p. 3) reported that one of the tasks assigned to her was the collection of edible mushrooms which she found growing "on sod buildings, in the prairie grass and in edges of wheat fields." A similar job fell to Olive Lockhart (1978) who was tasked with collecting mushrooms but also 'pigweed' (wild spinach) and dandelion greens for the family table. Another child raised on the prairies noted that children were also asked to collect other plants as well:

> In the fall, we'd pick rose-hips on the way home and my mother would make some kind of tea…. I think they got it from the Indians. The rose-hip tea was good for all sorts of illnesses (Broadfoot, 1988, p. 137).

[190] Although stories respecting berry picking did not reveal the dangers of children entering 'the bush', family members had to remain aware of the danger that the prairie itself presented for younger children. For example, McLeod (1977) discussed the case of a young girl from a neighbouring farm who went out in a light rain to collect mushrooms and other edible plants for a meal. She did not return home and despite a search, the girl and was not found for two days. When she was finally discovered, her basket contained a few wild mushrooms but she had died from exposure and starvation as the family had been rationing its dwindling food supply before the child went out on her search.

However, settlers faced a problem in that the state of knowledge at the time had no solution for many of the problems. They had to be accepted and the operation rebuilt afterward. For example, grasshoppers could eat a crop to the ground (Owram, 1980), cutworms could completely destroy acres of wheat (Report on the Census of the Northwest Provinces, 1906), and hail storms could ravage crops and kill animals (Kennedy, 1970).[192] No investment of time or labour could prevent the harm from being done but in other cases, the careful application of labour could at least reduce the damage.

For example, the most common defense against mosquitoes was to use their dislike for clouds of smoke as a defensive barrier against insect intrusion. Smoldering bonfires lit upwind of the pasture, barn or house to be protected ('smudges') would provide billows of thick smoke that would hold mosquitoes away from anything within the protection of the smoke cloud (Harrigan, 1980). Of

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[191] Given the dangers of using guns and poison, few children were involved in this type of work. However, three girls from the three lowest age groupings and two boys from the two lowest groups did note taking part in this function (Tables G and H, Appendix 2).

course, it would not necessarily be pleasant within the cloud as coughing, stinging eyes and the smell of smoke could themselves become irritants but it at least provided an option other than suffering continuous mosquito attacks. The effectiveness and convenience of smudges could also be improved by making a smudge portable or in a smaller size. This was achieved by using a smudge pot[193] to provide individual protection (Lehr, 1996, Harrigan, 1980).

With portable smudges, even individuals driving out into the country-side away from concentrations of people and animals that might attract clouds of the insects could protect themselves by lighting their smudge pot if the insects appeared. The effectiveness of such a strategy was shown in Evelyn Mcleod's (1977) description of the activities of her neighbour. This woman, a housewife named Molsberry, would hitch up her horse each morning during berry season at 5:00 a.m. and drive the eight miles to the coulees were the bushes grew. She would then spend the entire day picking pails full of the "raspberries, saskatoons, gooseberries and chokecherries [that] were to be had for the taking in those early days" but at all times, she used her prepared smudge (in a metal pail for ease of carrying) as a personal form of insect repellant. The smoke that followed her all day held off the mosquitoes that might otherwise have driven her from her quest (Mcleod, 1977, p. 17).

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[192] Hail was also reported by Caswell (1968) but while a few bruises were received and some clothing and bedding was soaked, the hail was somewhat a blessing as their water had been running low and by gathering the hailstones, the family was able to extend its supply.

[193] 'Smudge pots' were sources of thick smoke laid inside of a metal or clay pot that would hold the hot embers. Portability could be achieved by varying the size and weight of the pot (Turner, 1955).

In addition to the use of smudges to hold the mosquitoes away from people, reports discussing the effectiveness of netting as protection have also been made. As was noted earlier, the case of Dorthea Calverley (1985) suggests that netting could provide protection from bites but given that she described her outfit as a tent of netting, it would not likely prove realistic for those whose work required them to be active. However, a veil over the face could protect a person from inconvenient bites by the flocks of mosquitoes that "waited for you at the door in the morning" (Graham, 1974) and as noted by Mitchell (1976), adding a pair of gloves to the head veil could protect the skin usually exposed during the day.

Unfortunately, while clothing and netting could provide some protection for individuals, farm animals also suffered from the attacks of these insects and protected farmers could do little work if their animals were unsettled by constant biting. One solution that was recorded was to make covers for the animals as well. Potato sacks strategically cut and stitched back together could provide effective cover for the animals that had to be taken out of their sheds to perform their work during mosquito season (Turner, 1955).[194]

Roberts indicated that as difficult as it was to protect oneself against mosquitoes,[195] it was impossible to establish any control over the flies that invaded homes, barns and any other location, in or out of doors, without killing them. There were too many to use that solution and as such, he argued that:

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[194] In a moment of humour in his memoirs, Roy DeVore (1970, p. 36) suggested that the advertisers who promised that settlers would not find a single mosquito on the prairies had not been lying at all. Every mosquito Roy had seen in his time in the region "seemed married and with very large families"… not a single unattached mosquito in the bunch!

[195] Roberts (1971) indicated that some settlers were literally driven out of the prairies by the hordes of mosquitoes.

> As for the flies, we were absolutely at their mercy. We could not smoke them out, or drive them out or keep them out, though we waged perpetual war upon them and, at mealtime, did more fighting than eating (Roberts, 1971, p. 33).

In essence, during the warm months, the prairies could become a rather irritating environment as the various pests came out of hibernation or were hatched. Holding on to his sense of humor despite the conditions, Lathrop's father suggested that they should delay dinner until dark all of the time as at least that way, they would be unable to see what they were eating, including any flies that might have settled on the food (Roberts, 1971).

One additional problem faced by most settlers due to their living conditions, but one that could be controlled through the use of common products, was ridding the home of fleas. These parasites were carried into the home by pets and on the clothing and bodies of those in contact with farm animals but diverting fly-paper to duty as a flea killer could solve the problem. By covering a mop or broom with the paper and using this sticky implement to sweep the floor, fleas could be trapped in the glue along with the dust and other debris that was found. To cover the possibility that some of the insects might jump onto the legs of the sweeper to escape death, fly-paper would be pinned onto the pant legs to trap fleas as well. The whole process would be completed by placing fly-paper under the beds to trap new insects as they tried to reach the bedding where they could feast on people during the night ('What Other Women Have Found Out', 1908).

Luckily, the more dangerous 'pests' such as poisonous snakes in southern Alberta (Marquis of Lorne, 1886) and larger predators such as wolves and bear that could make life dangerous, rather than just unpleasant, did not tend to seek out human victims (Lehr, 1996; Jones, 1987; Potyondi, 1995; Roberts, 1971).[196] However, even coyotes might attack stock and while they might be relatively easy to kill (the fourteen-year-old sister of Sue Harrigan killed a coyote with rocks when her dog distracted it), wolves and bears that attacked the animals were a completely different class of predator (Harrigan, 1980; Chipman, 1969; Hiemstra, 1997). There is no doubt but that these larger predators frequented the same areas as the settlers (for example, eleven year old Ina Mumby (1902) reported that wolves attacked the family's chickens and turkeys during the nights) and could not be defeated without guns.

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[196] The memoir of Archie Althouse (u.d.) indicated that not all predators were unbeatable. The family was homesteading near Handel, Saskatchewan and had a problem with a weasel that could not be kept away from the henhouse. Archie and his mother, tired of their continuing losses, decided to put an end to the chicken thief but after holding it away from the chickens with long sticks, they found they could not kill it. The weasel was therefore held until the father returned that evening and killed it with a rifle.

7) *Protection of the Family from Prairie Fires*[197]

Of all of the preventable hazards present in the prairie region, the most dangerous and mortally terrifying was the prairie fires that shattered lives and property with an immediacy that none of the other impediments to farming could match (Eager, 1953; Ruthig, 1954). However, settler's property could sometimes be defended from the effects of such natural disasters. While such fires might begin with a lightening strike, a careless campfire, or a spark from a train engine or the steel wheels of the railcars (Cotton, u.d.), the wide-ranging lack of accessible water on the prairies meant that the most common defense to a fire was the firebreak or fireguard. A firebreak could be as large or small as a person desired but in general, the term denoted a deliberately created gap in the source of fuel available to the fire.

In the case of prairie fires, the fuel was made up of the "prairie wool" as the pioneers named it, or in other words the continuous stretch of wild grasses running across the prairies (Mitchell, 1976, p. 1). A single fire could theoretically burn hundreds of thousands of square kilometers of land, spreading through the 'wool' with the speed imparted by the wind to the wave front of the fire,[198] stopping only when reaching a natural barrier such as a stream or a patch of land with no unburned fuel close enough to the fire to ignite. Even then, the fire would only die if the dead patch was wide enough that embers could not re-ignite the blaze beyond the barrier.

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[197] For both genders, taking part in fighting prairie fires was an activity reserved primarily to older children. As noted in Tables G and H of Appendix 2, only 1 girl was under 12 years of age (plus 3 boys) while 2 girls and 6 boys were between 12 and 14 and an additional 2 girls and 3 boys were over 14.

Given the simplicity of the concept, a number of different approaches could be taken to creating firebreaks. For example, building a sod house on the land from which the sod 'bricks' for the walls had been cut would leave the home at the center of an area from which all fuel had been stripped. Similarly, firebreaks of bare land plowed around important areas could perform the same function, starving a fire of the fuel it needed to sustain itself. How wide the plowed area should be was a matter of judgment and terrain but with any wind at all, sparks from a fire would fly at least several feet before landing and possibly starting a new fire within a protected zone. The only valid defense strategy once sparks crossed the barrier was to have every available individual standing by with wet cloths or gunny-sacks to smother any sparks and beat out any flames. The lack of water on the prairies could lead to the failure of such tactics but no other realistic choice was available.[199]

When faced with the problem of wind carried sparks, the solution of the settlers in the Lloydminster area was to construct a firebreak two miles wide to the south of the town by plowing strips of land two miles apart and then deliberately

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[198] As described by Harrigan (1980, p. 8) "[a] prairie fire can travel much faster than a horse. It is a terrifying sight and yet it is fascinating."

[199] In her memoir, Hazel Dennison (u.d. p. 4) told a story respecting her family's fight against a prairie fire started by a spark from a train engine. Her family was homesteading near Assiniboia, Saskatchewan, one of the drier sections of the area, and to fight the fire, barrels of water had to be obtained from a small stream "to keep the gunny sacks wet to fight a blaze two feet high. We had to

burning the area inside the two barriers. This created a wide dead zone that they believed would halt or at least divert a massive and fast moving prairie fire that was bearing down on the town in the spring of 1905 (Strong, 1968). Even with this massive effort, burning bits of grass and turf blew into town but as these landed, the second phase of the defense came into play. Men, women and children from the town and surrounding evacuated areas fought the embers with water soaked gunny-sacks. The town was saved but as Strong indicated in her memoirs, the terror was visceral:

> Unless one has seen a prairie fire it is difficult to describe the horror of one, we were on the edge of it but as far as one could see, for thirty miles was told us after, it appeared as a sea of waves of fire. The heat and smoke were terrific (Strong, 1968, p. 9).

For those who failed to take such precautions and those without plows to set up a defensive ring around their buildings, a fire could mean ruin or death (Eager, 1953). For example, the papers of G.F. Chipman (1969) relating to his teaching experience near Edmonton, Alberta during 1903-1904 discussed the situation at the school when a prairie fire drew within thirty feet of their location. The building was of log construction but as with most buildings in the west, the roof was not built as well. Simple cut boards had been used but no other protection from fire existed and the wind was blowing the fire closer all the time.

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fight to save the pasture and cultivated land." They had no choice but to court injury or death if they were to have a farm left to operate.

As it was, Chipman indicated in his notes that "but for the good work of the pupils, their 'academy' would have passed into history" (Chipman, 1969, p. 6). Rather than panicking, the boys went to the nearest neighbor's house, filled two barrels with water and hauled them back to the school site like a junior volunteer fire brigade.

> By means of a primitive bucket brigade, we accomplished what seemed to be impossible. Three of the boys on the roof, some on tables under the eaves, and the rest handing the water made the system complete…. And when the fire had passed the danger zone it was a tired but happy group of school children who wended their way home, all proud of the work they had done (Chipman, 1969, p. 6).

Even with the rapid increase in the settler population during the first decade of the 20th century, prairie fires continued to prove a menace. This seems illogical given that settlement would mean the breaking up of long open stretches of prairie grasses in favor of protected quarter mile squares but even so, reports continued to refer to these fires with terror. The family of Mildred Hyndman (1979), for example, entered the prairies in 1910 when she was ten years old. In her memoir of her early years on the homestead near Morse, Saskatchewan, Mildred noted that the prairie grass was not as tall or thick as she had expected based on the information provided by her teachers respecting the west. In addition, they had many neighbors within walking distance, and creating plowed firebreaks was common practice. This would logically suggest that fire should not have posed as much of a threat, yet she went on to say that:

> prairie fires in summer were something to fear. At the first smell of smoke, our eyes would search over the horizons to locate the source. If a fire was found to be advancing in our direction, every one would rush to be prepared to fight it. Fresh sod be plowed while gunny sacks were wet. Then a fire set between the two rows of freshly turned sod in order to protect the buildings from the advancing fire. If there was a high wind, and it seemed that the fire would create its own wind. It would sometimes jump the fire guard to be quickly snuffed out with the wet sacks (Hyndman, 1979, p. 5).

However, even when firebreaks were created, conditions sometimes meant that they did not always manage to hold back the fires and each individual then became responsible for protecting whatever they could. For example, in her autobiography, Kennedy (1970) reported that the first fall spent on the family homestead saw a prairie fire jump their plowed fireguard. Despite attacking the fire with wet gunny sacks and brooms, their tent home was burnt out along with all of their possessions but luckily, there were only a few minor injuries to family members. The situation described in the memoirs of Evelyn McLeod (1977) was similar but in a very short period, she and her family faced two fires. The first, encountered on the trail to their new homestead, was a total surprise. It was early spring and the family had been traveling for three weeks, spending two days under a snowstorm, the balance of the week waiting for the snow to melt and the water-logged trail to dry, and then two weeks moving toward their property. At that point, they discovered that the prairies could dry very quickly after a snowstorm and sudden melt, as a prairie fire was being swept in their direction by the wind. McLeod indicated that:

> We halted, the horses were hitched to hand plows unloaded from the wagons and furrows cut for a firebreak. But time had run out. The strip…was not sufficiently wide and in some places the fire jumped across and had to be beaten out with wet gunny-sacks…Afterwards there was concern that there would be no grass for the livestock when we reached the homesteads (McLeod, 1977, p. 4).

On reaching their land they discovered that it had not yet been burned by the fire and the family rushed to once again break out the plow and set up a proper firebreak around their entire quarter-section to protect the grass for their cattle to eat. Additional breaks were plowed nearer the wagons where they would live until a house was built in case the first barrier did not work. Only three days after the work was done, a second fire "burned off the rest of the prairie" but as their full quarter section firebreak had worked, wild animals came to their quarter for food until new growth began (McLeod, 1977, p. 5).

Of course, not every effort to protect lives and property was successful. For instance, McElhone (1975) commented on the relentless pressure of the fires that would sweep the prairies, particularly a fire that started near Medicine Hat, Alberta, and then swept through the area of their family farm. A neighbor woman and her two children were trapped by the wall of fire and perished and while no members of his family died, McElhone recalled the fire vividly as:

> This fire was about a mile or more wide and it rolled with a tremendous wind behind it. The warning about the fire was the smoke that preceded the fire itself. It was rolling so fast that it would roll right over a building without burning it. If it rolled

> over a haystack it would leave the haystack on fire. This way, my father lost all his hay. He was left with a bunch of horses and very few cattle and had nothing to feed them with (McElhone, 1975, p. 5).

After such a devastating blow, the only decision to make was whether to quit the farming life or to carry on as best one could. No amount of planning, no amount of labour by family members and no amount of foresight could protect a farm from such an elemental force.

8) Summary

With respect to the performance of labour associated with family subsistence, both boys and girls worked on projects tied to the survival of the family and farm. As such, many children of both genders contributed their labour to obtaining water (although well-digging was apparently a task limited to men and boys), fuel for cooking and heating, obtaining food for family consumption from both domestic and wild animals, birds and fish, and from the gardens and wild plants. Boys and girls were both also involved in preparing defenses against insects and other pests and in protecting their families and farms from destruction by fire.

However the labour was divided, it is clear that children made major contributions to the welfare and survival of farm families with their work.[200] Certainly, adults supervised this labour and trained the children in the necessary skills and knowledge, but by working on everything from the home to food to fire and water, children made a difference. While this may not have had a direct bearing on the viability of the farm in a monetary sense (except to the degree that family labour limited spending), it would lessen the chances that a family would have to abandon their homestead. In effect, the total contribution of such labour to family well-being was made possible by the work of children as children were involved with virtually every task that had to be performed in the labour-intensive effort to develop and operate their family farm.

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[200] For example, Pansey Pue (1975) was twelve years old when her family migrated to the Cheadle district of Alberta in 1911after her father's death. Pansey found herself in a position where her labour, along with that of her younger brothers, her older brother and her mother, was necessary to family survival. For Pansey, this meant caring for chickens and helping with the milking of the family cows but to a large degree, her work consisted of tasks within the house as "[there] was a good deal to do in the house. [She] was the only girl to help [her] mother… [and her] brothers were so very young" (Pue, 1975, p. 3). When asked whether the homestead could supply them with

CHAPTER EIGHT

DOMESTIC LABOUR

The purpose of this Chapter is to continue the discussion of the use of children's labour in overcoming the obstacles faced on the prairies in order to support family survival. Attention is directed at the performance of domestic labour, that is, work tasks that supported the comfort, well-being and morale of the family. These tasks were conducted in the home and as discussed in Section one, were subject to the gendered attitudes of the time that consigned housework to female members of the family.

Section two begins the review of the specific tasks performed by children by focusing on preparing items for consumption or use through cooking and baking, while Section three deals with the labour associated with washing clothes and making beds. Section four focuses on the least skilled aspect of the domestic sphere, the cleaning of the home and its contents while section five concentrates on children's sewing, knitting and crocheting ability. Section six discusses childcare responsibilities.

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sufficient food and other resources to take care of the family needs, Pansey's response was that "It had to…Nothing else could be done…It was our only means of support" (Pue, 1975, p. 4).

Section seven completes the Chapter by summarizing the findings, and includes a discussion of the role that gender played in determining which children were actually involved in carrying out the various tasks.[201]

1) Social Attitudes

Given the fixed gendered labour roles in the domestic sphere among adults as was discussed earlier, it would be surprising if such a division of labour did not also exist among children. The nature of the labour involved and the skills required were those that society would have expected to be possessed by females, a biased social attitude that can be seen in newspaper articles published at the time. For example, a letter submitted to The Nor'-West Farmer by a correspondent named Ruskin (1900) advocated that females be trained to know the qualities of the foods available (and how best to cook or serve them). However, the article did not suggest any need for such skills on the part of boys. This was not an unusual submission as shown by the fact that approximately one year later, Hyatt (1901) made similar pronouncements respecting the proper types of labour to be performed by females in the west. In Hyatt's case, the argument revolved around washing and ironing clothes, preserving fruits or other produce, sewing, creating a bountiful garden, and cleaning chickens for the table but the intent was the same. All labour that could be designated as 'housework' or interpreted as 'caring' for others was to be identified as the exclusive duty of women and their female helpers. In fact, it was assumed that a thorough grounding in domestic labour would be of greatest benefit to girls as "about 85 per cent of the girls on the farm [were] predestined to become homemakers and homekeepers before they [reached] the age of 28. This is the way of the world" (Florence, 1901, p. 182).

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[201] As was the case with productive labour, domestic labour was quite sharply divided between genders. As set out in Table K of Appendix 2, only 17 boys took part in performing domestic tasks as compared to 89 girls, a virtual mirror image of the distribution of work in production. The task breakdown between genders is shown by Tables I and J of Appendix 2 to have been overwhelmingly left to the female children on prairie farms. Only token numbers of boys helped with food preparation (2 boys as compared to 61girls), washing clothing and other items (2 boys and 66 girls), sewing (1 boy and 23 girls) and child care (5 boys and 21 girls). Only in the area of house cleaning did a meaningful number of boys (12 in all) help the 83 girls who were also involved in this task.

Given this predestination, it was anticipated that farmers' daughters would acquire the skills necessary for the proper running of a home and become hardworking, caring, people happy with their place in life. This idealized version of the perfect daughter was expressed in a poem written by an anonymous author and published in the May, 1899 edition of The Nor'-West Farmer:

You should see her in the kitchen,
Cap and apron white as snow,
In her eyes the love-light shining-
On her cheeks a rosy glow.

Sleeves rolled up above the elbows,
Sweeping here and dusting there,
This fair daughter of the farmer,
For the household hath a care.

And her song is just as tuneful,
And her step is just as light,
As when she, sweet merry-maker'
Joined her mates in play last night.

> Oh the little farmer's daughter,
> (Heaven bless her as she goes)
> She is fairer than the lily,
> She is sweeter than the rose (p. 341).

Given such attitudes, it is not surprising that the 'proper' training and work for females was seen to be in basic domestic concerns. Her birth family could benefit from her valuable efforts while she was single and her marital family could be cared for in due course. Even if the daughter never married, the skills she could learn in food preparation, baking and sewing, all of which training could be obtained by working on the family farm, could be put to use commercially through employment as a domestic servant (Florence, 1901). As one mother proudly noted about her own daughter:

> Go to her house to-day, eat at her table and you won't dispute me. She learned to cook, to make, to mend, to wash, to iron, to put up fruit, to make gilt-edged butter, etc. She could harness and drive a spirited horse, milk a cow, teach a calf to drink; she could sing and play on an organ, and when strangers ask her where she graduated she says she did most of her graduating at home with her father and mother. (Hyatt, 1901, p. 100).

The acquisition of the skills that would presumably prepare young girls to fit the roles deigned for them by the society of the late nineteenth century began 'at the knee' of their same-sex parent. As such, children were influenced constantly, not only by deliberate lessons but by the example set by the parent in their daily lives. Of course, the advice given to mothers on what to teach their girls differed substantially from that for sons. Rather than encouraging a sense of involvement in the planning of the future of the farm or an expectation of financial rewards, the "wise" mothers ensured that their daughters were trained in useful skills from the earliest possible age (Anonymous, 1899b, p. 622). This could be done by prompting girls to 'play house' and copy their mother's actions. Thus, a small pie could be prepared, a single item washed with her own tub and washboard, she could observe how beds were made, learn to set a table using her own miniature tea set and help with the dusting and sweeping at a very early age. Skill and pride of accomplishment would flow from the 'play' and even if the girl did prefer "her book, her piano, her pencil... she is [also] ready and equal to her broom, her saucepan, and her flat-iron" (Anonymous, 1899b, p. 623).

Aside from such general knowledge and skills, domestic 'apprentices' (daughters) would also have learned the numerous special processes and helpful techniques that made work simpler in the west or solved some of the problems special to the region. For example, girls would learn that adding carbolic acid to whitewash would stop the smell of the paint permeating stored foods, an important point given that many soddies were whitewashed. Using borax as a coating over fresh meat and chickens to delay rotting would come in handy as no refrigeration was readily available except for the local stream.[202] Flannel was recommended as both the proper type of cloth for washing walls and for use in winding tightly around a baby's stomach to cure diarrhea. Dirty papered walls could be effectively cleaned with stale bread (a possible use of the penicillin produced by some bread molds to kill bacteria within pioneer homes) while the use of vinegar could neutralize the smell of onions when cooking ('Useful Hints', 1900).

Other 'tricks of the domestic trade' for girls to learn included the fact that a flat-iron washed occasionally with water and melted lard (two quarts of water to one tablespoonful of lard) would not stick to clothes, and that salt dried in an oven and ground fine in a mortar would not clump in damp weather. The column also recommended the use of paper pasted to the top of jars of preserves rather than metal or glass covers to eliminate the chance of mould developing, and instructed readers on the process to be followed to make water-proof glue that would be useful for the home and farm. This involved soaking ordinary glue in water and then dissolving the mixture into warmed linseed oil and letting it set ('Household Hints', 1897, p. 30). Clearly, the well-trained girl had much to learn from her mother if she was to fulfill her socially mandated role in an agricultural society. As noted by an anonymous contributor to the June, 1908 (p. 45) edition of The Grain Grower's Guide, "[there] is no school better than the home for training girls for the womanly duties of life, and no teacher like a capable and patient mother."

This social attitude favoring the well trained hardworking girl dedicated to the welfare of her family was reinforced by the negative stereotype assigned to

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[202] It is interesting to note that at the same time that borax was used as a preservative for food, it was also seen as a miracle product as it had many other applications including use as an effective bug

girls who did not 'fit' the role. In fact, comments made in newspaper articles suggested that the worst thing that a man intending to farm could do was marry a "doll" (Anonymous, 1897, p. 196; Anonymous, 1900, p. 635). It was believed that such women were more worried about their appearance than the need for hard work in a farm setting. Instead of acquiring skills directed at maintaining order and keeping the farmhouse presentable and well stocked with home made foods, they were concerned with being 'showy creatures' and in making "trips to the village store to admire the latest styles" (Anonymous, 1900, p. 635).

Thus, rather than marrying a woman because of her looks, advice columns recommended the use of different standards in assessing a possible farming mate. For example, Mrs. M.E. Graham, a contributor to The Grain Growers' Guide, wrote that in choosing a bride, young farm men should be practical and search for a woman who had the ability to assist them in their endeavors. From her perspective, a man should "use just as much common sense as… in buying a cow or a horse" rather than falling in love with the first pretty girl he noticed (Graham, 1909, p. 24). Using an analogy borrowed from the horse-breeding field, she argued that it was important to find a woman with the right personality, abilities and skills to be helpful on the farm, indicating that a practical man had to realize that he needed a Clydesdale rather than a Percheron for some tasks. She elaborated on this by stating:

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deterrent, water softener and dish soap ('Exchange', 1900).

> While some men see nothing but the grooming and the harness, a more sensible man would select his ideal type, then look for good lungs, with good staying powers, good limbs, good feet, good heart action; in fact a well developed and proportioned body, with enough fat to show an appearance of being well nourished…. She should have good teeth and breathe, a healthy color, clear intelligent eyes and a pleasing expression (Graham, 1909, pp. 24-25).

The same sentiment was expressed by a contributor named Bill Johnson in a poem published in The Nor'-West Farmer in August, 1897 (p. 289). The poem indicated:

> I've allus notissed fellers
> Hit's a risky thing to do
> To kalkalate accordin'
> To how things looks to you.
> The man 'at talks the nicest
> Don't help you up the hill;
> The one 'at prays the loudest
> Don't allus pay his bill.
> Sometimes the biggest fishes
> Bites the smallest kinds o' baits;
> An' mighty ugly wimmin
> Can make the best o' mates.

This is not to say that beautiful women would automatically fail the test as potential farm wives, but rather that qualities other than beauty should rule the choice of a partner.

Given this social imperative, girls such as Alice Campbell (1902) would have been considered to be an optimum catch as a future bride. Alice was a twelve-year-old from the area of Pomeroy, Manitoba who was a multi-talented youngster performing work both within and outside of the home. As she described her skills and work activity, she provided virtually every conceivable type of labour that could be expected:

> I can scrub and bake cakes and make beds and get meals ready and peel potatoes wash dishes clean the stove and help to wash clothes and sweep floors and iron. We have a cream separator. I can turn it when putting milk through it and feed calves carry in wood and feed hens. We have about 80 hens and five turkeys and three roosters. I gather eggs.... and feed my horse. I drive a black pony In the fall and summer I bring home the cows to be milked and sometimes I help to milk and I get supper and carry in water and all the wood that's used (Campbell, 1902, p. 333).

There is no indication of what Alice looked like but her skills and lack of fear of hard work on the farm would ensure that she was a prime candidate whatever her appearance.

A letter written by Dora Darwood (1902) of Meadow Lea, Manitoba expressed this same type of industry as she described the numerous chores and tasks that she and her mother were responsible for in the house and yard. At fifteen, Dora took on the duty of performing all of the basic housework including cleaning, scrubbing floors, sweeping, washing and ironing clothes and also did some of the baking and cooking. In addition, she helped milk the family cows while her mother concentrated on food preparation and converting the raw milk into cream and butter for the family's use. Thus, as stated by Dora (1902, p. 507), "[any] girl who lives on a farm knows what a lot of work there is to do." In other words, she was cognizant of the fact that as a potential farmer's bride, her role would likely prove to be a difficult one as she would likely receive little assistance in her domestic work from the men or boys in her life.[203]

The reward of marriage for a girl's industry and acceptance of her role was substantiated by the experience of Gladys Holmes when she was a teenager. As she described the scenario, she was "scrubbing wood floors with soft soap and a scrubbing brush" and "while [she] was down on [her] knees scrubbing the kitchen floor [she] received [her] first proposal of marriage" (Holmes, u.d., p. 7); perhaps proving the argument of Mrs. M.E. Graham that men should admire girls with practical skills rather than coveting beauty (Graham, 1909).

2) *Food Preparation*[204]

While cleaning the floor was a practical skill, one of the most necessary domestic talents to be acquired was the ability to provide wholesome meals for the family. Such cooking abilities were seldom attained by boys although they should have been taught as a matter of survival given that eighteen-year-old boys were entitled to claim a homestead and move out on their own. These boys needed food as well as the ability to build a house and plow a field but only one boy, nine-year-old James Brander (1902) from Nesbitt, Manitoba made any mention of being somewhat prepared for the future. He stated that he was able to peel potatoes, however he did not know how to cook them. If this example is any indication of the cooking skill of the young men of the era, it is not surprising that many single male settlers found themselves in dire straights. For example, Mildred Hyndman (1979, p. 3) tells of the bachelors in her area coming to her mother for advice on cooking:

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[203] The fact that men and boys seldom assisted with domestic labour was illustrated by Dora's younger brother Willie Darwood. Willie primarily worked in the fields with his father and cared for animals. To Dora's consternation, his only connection to the performance of domestic or subsistence work was in operating the cream separator.

[204] As shown in Tables I and J of Appendix 2, the girls involved in preparing food came from all age groups (the 2 boys who participated were between 9 and 11 years old). Numbers ranged from 5 of the 6 to 8 year olds to 19 between 9 and 11, 30 in the 12 to 14 group and 7 who were over 14.

> [They] had never cooked a meal before, and the disasters they had from their efforts was hilarious. They took it all in good fun and came to my mother for help with it. One of them tried to bake bread using baking powder instead of yeast, and couldn't understand why it wouldn't rise like his mother's did.

Her mother helped them but Mildred doubted that any ate as well as her family even with their updated knowledge. In fact, she speculated further that because of their lack of training and time to prepare stockpiles of preserved foods, single men would be unable to respond adequately to unexpected events such as a crop or garden failure. She came to this conclusion because of her family's own experiences with the loss of their food crop the year before. Her family was able to survive this disaster by relying on the home made products they had stored including smoked ham, and jars of preserved fruit and jams. Given that bachelors did not know how to cook, she believed that it was unlikely that they would have been capable of making similar preparations. Had they spent more time in the kitchen as children, the situation may have been different as they would have been more self-sufficient (Hyndman, 1979).

The advantage held by Mildred's family and others resulted from the training that its female members had received as children. For girls, learning how to bake cakes, pies and bread and being able to prepare meals for the family began at an early age but the order in which they learned specific cooking tasks differed from family to family. For example, being able to bake seemed to be of the greatest importance in some households. Thus, while fourteen-year-old Lottie Kent (1902) of Wawanesa, Manitoba was old enough to have received training in cooking meals, her only comment was that she took part in baking. Similarly, Annie Lambert (1902) of Boissevain, Manitoba began baking when she was twelve years old and fourteen-year-old Agnes White (1902) mentioned that she baked for her family in a letter discussing her work on the homestead.[205]

It may well be that such limited participation in food preparation for these particular girls was a result of caution in having them take on the full load of cooking for the family or the need for a longer period of training before they would be ready to cook palatable meals. However, given the fact that girls both younger and older than those discussed above did take part in all aspects of the cooking process in other families, the more logical answer to the question of widely different skill levels among girls was that training began at different ages at the whim of the mother. For example, Gertie Slater (1902, p. 420), a thirteen-year-old girl from Portage la Prairie, Manitoba worked hard in the home and took part in "baking bread and cake and cooking meals" as well as washing dishes. Similarly, Annie Gilliland (1902) of Bowden, Alberta was trusted to get up each morning at 6:00 a.m. to make breakfast for the family when she was thirteen, and then spent much of the rest of her day baking bread and cakes and cleaning the home. The youngest girl to mention cooking meals was Meta Williamson (1902) who, at eleven years of age was responsible for helping her mother get dinner ready for the family on their farm near Regina, Saskatchewan. As she was more of a helper rather than an independent cook, it is likely that her experience was related to the beginning of the training she would receive before 'graduating' to a position in which 'she' alone would be feeding the family

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[205] One somewhat anomalous report was provided by May Leece (1902), of Holmfield, Manitoba. She indicated that she was capable of performing every household task (and could milk cows and

However, this emphasis on training did not mean that all women were proficient cooks when they first arrived in western Canada. The mother of Mary Waddell (u.d.) for example, had never made bread in the past, always having had servants to perform such tasks. As such, she had many failures (the family kept one notable loaf that turned out rather hard as a doorstop) and the family cow Beauty was generally happy to consume the other less than perfect batches. Many of the failures resulted from holding the dough overnight to rise during the winter as the cold temperatures in the house made the dough tough. One experiment in

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care for livestock) except baking. She did not indicate whether this was a matter of personal preference or a lack of skill.

maintaining the proper level of warmth by keeping the tub of batter under the covers on her parents' bed worked all too well. The dough overflowed the tub at the bottom of the bed but as Beauty enjoyed uncooked dough as well as she did the overcooked variety, at least part of that batch was not wasted. Unfortunately, by the time the mother became skillful in baking, her strength failed her and Mary had to take over the kneading and later, all of the baking jobs. After six years of practice Mary became good enough that she began to win prizes at local fairs, including one hundred pounds of flour from 'The Womens' Grain Growers Club' when she was sixteen, beating out jealous older women who thought her too young to be in the competition.

Despite the drudgery of working indoors much of the day and standing over a wood-fired stove baking bread and preparing meals, many of the girls who noted such labour in their memoirs, diaries and letters seemed excited, or at least pleased by the chance to help their mothers and learn these skills. For example, fourteen-year-old Bertha Cheavins (1902, p. 740) from Chatter, Saskatchewan indicated that she enjoyed domestic labour "very much" while others such as fourteen-year-old Rose Shaver (1902, p. 917) of Minnedosa, Manitoba stated that they "liked" the work they were assigned. Bertha Myer was more eloquent in her expression of happiness over her assignment to help her mother with preparing meals, particularly during harvest season when huge meals had to be prepared for the threshing crews. This may have been partially the result of having new faces around the farm and a sense of excitement as another farming year came to a close.

Regardless of the reason, she wrote that it "was great fun to help with the men's afternoon lunch" even though the preparation work had been heavy (Myer, u.d., p. 3).[206]

3) *Washing Clothes and Making Beds*[207]

As with baking and cooking, the job of washing clothes and other items required specialized skills. The person performing the task had to decide the best means of washing particular items, determine whether bleach should be used and an appropriate stain removal technique had to be chosen when necessary (Johnston, 1973). Some strength and endurance were also required as buckets of water might have to be hauled, washing was generally done by rubbing the items against a washboard immersed in soapy water, and the water was wrung out of the clean items by hand before drying (Doolittle, 1978). Further, there was some danger of injury as boiling water was used in the process of cleaning most items (Jordison, 1979) and the use of heavy cast metal irons heated on the family stove to remove wrinkles could leave burns on those who were careless (Lyons, 1902).

The basic washing process was described by Sylvia Mitchel (1976) in her memoir of life as a child on a farm near Regina, Saskatchewan. The first step was to ensure that a supply of water sufficient for washing and rinsing the volume of clothing and other cloth items was available. This could be done in several ways depending on the situation on the particular farm. For Sylvia's family, this meant arranging for her father to haul barrels of water from a nearby slough on a stone boat but for those with wells such as Ken Doolittle (1978) from Maymont, Saskatchewan, buckets would be carried from the well to the house by the children or their mother.[208] The portion of the water to be used for washing the items would be heated in a boiler on the wood stove and depending on how dirty the items were, they might also be boiled in the pot before moving to a wash tub filled with hot water and soap[209] to be scrubbed against a washboard until clean.[210]

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[206] Bertha and her mother had been baking and cooking for days to prepare for the arrival of the crew. "[B]utter was churned and stored in crocks which were lowered into the well to keep cool and fresh", hams were cooked, pies were prepared and water supplies were checked to be sure that adequate provisions would be available (Myer, u.d., p. 3).

[207] Only 2 boys reported involvement in this type of work and both were between 9 and 11 years of age. However, the 66 girls who reported washing clothes and making beds were concentrated in

This work was particularly strenuous if large families were involved. For example, attempting to wash the dirty clothes of "six men, a boy, two girls and a woman, [along with] bedding, table linen, towels" and other miscellaneous items would translate into an all day process (Holmes, u.d., p. 7). Even after washing, the work was not done as the clean items had to have the excess water wrung from them, and then had to be hung from a clothesline to dry. (Sylvia Mitchell's wash

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two age groups with 20 aged 9 to 11 and 40 aged 12 to 14. Only 3 girls were in the 6 to 8 year old group and the remaining 3 were over 14 (Tables I and J, Appendix 2).

[208] Mitchell (1976, p. 1) also noted that in the winter, buckets of snow might be gathered and melted in their large copper boiler although "it took an awful lot of snow to fill".

[209] As described by Jennie Johnston (1973) of Neilburg, Saskatchewan, the water in her area came from sloughs and as such, after boiling and bleaching, items would be dropped into the yellow water to be scrubbed against a washboard with homemade lye soap that did not lather because of the hard water. She did not mention if a yellow tinge was left on their clothes after the washing process was complete.

[210] Even when washing machines were acquired, they were hand-powered and a great deal of endurance, or a large number of assistants, was required to complete the work (Mitchell, 1976).

was hung on a line that "stretched between the house and the little house"[211] (Mitchell, 1976, p. 1). In the winter, the process became more cumbersome as the wash had to be "peeled off the line and [taken] in crackling, stiff as boards, to be set up or draped over chairs beside the stove to thaw out" and finish drying (Mitchell, 1976, p. 1).

Despite, or possibly because, of the amount of work needed to maintain the cleanliness of the family and the home, most of the girls who wrote of their work on the farm mentioned some involvement with the wash or the labour that followed such as remaking beds with the fresh sheets and blankets. Dozens of girls contributed their labour to these tasks including fifteen-year-old Annie Penhall (1902) from Bear Creek, Manitoba (1902), twelve-year-old Mary Lightbourn (1902) from Brandon, Manitoba (1902) and eleven-year-old Lavinia Gaudin (1902) from Melita, Manitoba all of whom reported that they did the washing and helped with everything else around the house. Katherine Wightman (1902) from La Riviere, Ann Davidson (1902), from Carberry, Laura Brander (1902) from Nebitt, Jane Chesney (1902) from Innerkip, and Blanche Keeping (1902) from Austin (all between the ages of 11 to 13 years and all from the province of Manitoba) reported making beds in addition to having other household responsibilities. However, twelve-year-old Gracie Currie (1902) of Edrans, Manitoba may have been the busiest of all of these girls as in her letter, she noted that she made the beds for her entire family which included her parents and six other children.

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[211] This was a polite name for an out-house.

Among farm boys, only two mentioned involvement with washing clothes and making beds. Robert Northey (1902), a nine-year-old from Holland, Manitoba stated that he helped to make the beds when the washing was complete, while ten-year-old Bertie Winter (1902) of Orange Ridge, Manitoba, only took part in the washing process. However, other boys were drafted into washing duty when the washing job was too large for the mother and daughters to handle. In these cases, an entire family could have a role to play in completing the task. For instance, Agnes Walker (1979) of Tullisville, Saskatchewan described one such job that her family performed as a group each spring when they could work outside and collect sufficient soft water (melted snow)[212] for their laundry needs. Soft water was required to wash all of their pure woolen blankets and clothing as hard water would matt the wool fibers and destroy the cloth. The job began with Agnes and her brother hauling pails of snow and clean melt-water to the house to be boiled in large containers. The boiled water would be mixed with cold in the washing tubs until a moderate temperature was reached (care also had to be taken as hot water would mat the wool and cold water would not dissolve the soap used to clean the fabric).[213] The soap jelly prepared the night before would form suds when put into the warm water tubs. The blankets went into the tubs and at that point, the children took over the process once again. Boots and stockings came off and bare feet went into the tubs. The blankets were then thoroughly stomped to circulate the warm soapy water through the fabric.[214] (1979, p. 3). Each blanket would be turned over when Agnes's mother deemed one side done, and the stomping would begin again but once complete, the blankets had to be held above the tub and twisted tightly to wring out the soapy water before being dumped into the rinse water for a bit more stomping to get the last soap particles out of the material.

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[212] As noted by Jennie Johnston (1973) in her memoir of life on her family's Lake Manitou, Saskatchewan homestead, it was impossible to gather soft water in the summer months without wooden shingles as a sod roof would either absorb the soft water rain or contaminate the water.

As the blankets were fairly large and would be quite heavy when filled with water, the wringing process was generally a job for her mother and father. However, Agnes indicated that if her father was busy, the children would help the mother to twist out the soapy water, and later the rinse water, before the blanket was hung to dry. (Whenever possible, their father was called upon for this task as he had the strength to hold the wet blankets off the ground and to twist out more water and thus reduce the drying time required.) In the final step of the operation, the blankets were taken off the drying line and stretched out to restore their shape. Once again, the children helped by each taking a corner while their mother held two ends, however they found that they did not have the strength to do the best job of it and the father was called upon for his assistance. Given that this was such a strenuous job involving all members of the family, the day became special to the Walker's as it came to represent a traditional celebration of the end of winter. In fact, they turned the job into a family festival complete with a special meal of 'stovies' that the family loved to eat when all of the work was done.[215]

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[213] The only available soap was hard yellow bars of 'Royal Crown' soap and it had to be prepared for use with the cloth. The soap was "shaved into an empty syrup pail" and water was added so that "in the morning it had become soft jelly" (Walker, 1979, p. 2-3).

[214] Stomping through the fabric seems to have been the children's favourite part of the washing process. As Agnes put it, "Back and forth and round and round. What fun!" (1979, p. 3)

4) Cleaning the Home and its Contents[216]

In addition to helping out with some of the more strenuous tasks around the home, boys also reported assisting with basic cleaning duties. For example, nine-year-old Walter Brown (1902) from Portage la Prairie indicated that he washed dishes while thirteen-year-old W.E. McIntyre (1902) from Oak River, Manitoba stated that he both washed and dried the dishes. Nine-year-old Otto Miller (1902) of Carbery, Manitoba was somewhat more flexible as he swept the floor in addition to cleaning up the dishes while ten-year-old Bertie Winter (1902) of Orange Ridge, Manitoba was quite helpful around the house. He handled the dishwashing chores and swept floors but also scrubbed the floors, washed clothes and dusted the house.

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[215] 'Stovies' were described as a potato dish in which sliced potatoes, onions and oatmeal were slow boiled in milk and served with fried herring. The cooking continued while the blanket cleaning was underway and was eaten after the work was complete.

[216] Of the boys who took part in cleaning the house and its contents, 9 were between the ages of 9 and 11 but the 4 other boys were split equally between the 6 to 8 and 12 to 14 groups (Table J, Appendix 2). However, an apparent age distinction existed for girls in that the number participating increased with age. Thus, while 4 girls between 6 and 8 did cleaning, 29 between 9 and 11, 43 between 12 and 14, and 7 who were over 14 years old, also performed these tasks.

Although girls tended to handle more home related tasks than boys, and a greater variety of the delicate, messy or complicated jobs, some remained responsible for the same basic tasks as boys. For example, Violet Ness (1902), a nine-year-old girl from St. Charles Manitoba did nothing but wash dishes, sweep and dust while eight-year-old Annie Miller (1902) of Pierson, Manitoba reported washing dishes and sweeping floors. Similarly, Mary Tudhope (1902), an eleven-year-old girl from Arcola, Saskatchewan indicated that her duties involved washing dishes, scrubbing floors, sweeping, dusting and peeling potatoes.

However, the cases in which girls took on more responsibility for domestic labour than their male compatriots were more numerous and their contributions more apparent. A case in point was that of Ethel Rand (1901, p. 598), an eleven-year-old from Crystal City, Manitoba. This girl performed the usual jobs of washing, scrubbing, sweeping and ironing but in addition was required to take care of her six younger siblings as her mother was "not very strong". The same sort of spirit respecting housework was shown by a nine-year-old girl from Calgary, Alberta named Beatrice Moss (1901). She wrote that she was able to wash the dishes, set the table, sweep, and scrub the floor. Her desire to help even further was made clear as she mentioned that she hoped that her mother would eventually let her handle all of the washing for the family.

Other specialized cleaning assignments existed on the prairies and girls were involved with these tasks as well. For example, six-year-old Evelyn McLeod's (1977) duties included all tasks associated with maintaining the home performing the usual sorts of cleaning and straightening, but she also had to deal with the 'rag carpet' that they had covering the floor in the main room of the house. This carpet, made up of three foot wide strips of woven material, had to be swept each day but on occasion, required greater maintenance. At those times the tacks holding the carpet to the floor were removed and:

> It was taken out to the clothes line and beaten to remove some of the dust, then the strips ripped apart and washed. It took several days to complete the task, as all these strips had to be sewn together again by hand before the carpet was relaid (McLeod, 1977, p. 7).

As dirty as dealing with rag rugs could be, that chore did not compare to the task of cleaning lamp chimneys and cleaning and 'blacking'[217] the stove. These tasks generated filth as the black carbon that coated lamp chimneys, the ash, burnt foods and stove blacking paste stuck to glass, metal, clothing and skin alike. As such, the girls who volunteered or were assigned to this work such as thirteen-year-old Gertie Slater (1902) of Portage la Prairie, eleven-year-old Bessie Robinson (1902) from Leduc, Alberta and twelve-year-old Blanche Keeping (1902) from Austin, Manitoba, performed some of the worst tasks possible in the domestic sphere. As described by Ollie Bell (1976, p. 4), a girl who immigrated with her family from Oregon to High River, Alberta, blacking the stove was the worst job she had because at times she "looked more like the stove than the stove did!"

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[217] 'Blacking' the stove refers to applying a coat of black colored 'paste' to the stove to hide blemishes and discoloration. The paste (prepared with turpentine not water) was applied to a cold stove. The stove would then be lit to 'burn in' the blacking which could then be polished with a brush (Exchange, 1900).

5) Sewing, Knitting and Crocheting[218]

While labour directed at maintaining the cleanliness of the family home was necessary, it was work that could be performed by the least skilled girls and boys in the family. However, other tasks, for instance sewing, knitting, darning and crocheting required either a natural aptitude for the work or training and practice to develop the necessary skills. By encouraging children to perform such labour, they would be able to contribute to the performance of skilled chores and reduce the workload for each adult individual. Such skills could also be of great benefit to the operation as money otherwise destined to be spent on manufactured products could be redirected or saved. For example, one particularly inventive woman, Evelyn McLeod (1977), solved what could have been a major problem for her family. Her children faced the prospect of a winter with no shoes for their feet as the family had no money to spend due to the low purchase price offered for their crop. Mrs. McLeod borrowed the idea of moccasins, something she could sew by hand, from the native tribes and managed to improvise functional winter footwear for the family out of binder canvass that they had on hand.

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[218] Only one boy over the age of 16 indicated that he had learned to sew but the girls who participated came from all age groups (Tables I and J, Appendix 2). Only 1 young girl from the 6 to 8 group took part but 6 between 9 and 11, 13 in the 12 to 14 grouping and 3 girls over 14 noted sewing tasks in their writings.

Of course, reserving all of the sewing duties to adult members of the household would not comply with the social duty to pass skills on to children so that they might become smoothly functioning members of the community. Thus, the ability to make or repair clothing and other items was taught to the children of the family, mainly the girls, and many of them became quite competent.[219] Jean Murray (1902), for example, was taught to sew on her family homestead near Lyleton, Manitoba and eventually became capable of the detailed work needed to create her own aprons and print waists by the time she was fifteen years old. Mamie Coxe (1902) of Brandon, Manitoba was also a quick study and was turning out decent sewn items and fancy work (stitching or embroidery) at age thirteen while other girls, including thirteen-year-old Katherine Wightman (1902) and twelve-year-old Montana Barber (1902) of Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan worked on projects that required knitting or crocheting.[220]

However, not all boys avoided such instruction and not all men had wives or domestic servants to handle the tasks for them. As such, learning the sewing arts could also be invaluable for males. For example, a young man using the pen name 'Youth of Sixteen' writing to The Nor'-West Farmer in 1898 made the usefulness of his sewing abilities clear. In his letter, the author indicated that rather than wasting away all of the hours on winter evenings when no work was being done on the farm, his mother had impressed upon him that it was just as important for boys as girls to learn the skills of sewing, knitting and darning. Hours for playing, reading or taking part in indoor games were thus cut back in favor of lessons that might help the boy be more comfortable than his companions when he left to take on paying work or obtained his own farm. Rather than having " the finger sticking out of a mit, the toe sticking out of a sock or a hole in the heel", he could use his new skills to regain warmth and comfort ('Youth of Sixteen', 1898, p. 528). 'Youth of Sixteen' finished his letter to the newspaper by advising readers that he had been sewing since he was eleven (as had his brother who was also taught these skills) and found this ability "very useful".[221]

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[219] Although not clothing in a strict sense, hats were practical items useful to farmers working in the hot prairie sunshine. Thus, the straw weaving skills that Jessie McDonald (1902) of Morinville, Alberta used to make hats for her father could prove beneficial.

[220] It should be noted that Montana Barber also used her skills for more practical purposes such as darning her stockings and making repairs to torn clothing, as did Elsie Brown (1902) of Winlaw, Saskatchewan. Elsie even repaired holes in her brother's stockings, saving her mother from having

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to spend her time on that project. Others such as Annie Gilliland (1902) worked on making home-made quilts which were often used as blankets to cover beds or as throws over other furnishings.

[221] Other 'manufacturing' skills that contributed to the well-being of the family included the ability to build furniture out of available materials. For example, L.J.W. Montgomery of the Assiniboia district wrote The Nor'-West Farmer respecting the nature of the furnishings used in his family's home. When he was a boy he helped to build handcrafted furniture used in his family home out of articles available to most farmers or readily located in the wild. Such items were in the majority in the Montgomery home and the writer noted that:

> a comfortable lounge has been made of a long, narrow dry goods box, and is well stuffed and covered with a pretty cover made of the brightest pieces her [mother's] patch-bag contained. Several chairs (all of home manufacture) are around and each has a bright cushion....One easy chair is made out of a barrel… neat home-made rugs cover the floor (Montgomery, 1898, p. 129).

While the use of old boxes and barrels could lead to the creation of useful furnishings, the goal of Kathleen Smith's mother was to utilize her imagination and creativity to design unique furnishings that could be built out of locally available materials. Her designs were so simple to use that a child could (and did) follow them to create functional furniture for the home:

> Mother would plan a chair, a cot, or a crib and show my brother just how to go about building it. She would have him peel the poplar bark off poles and dry them well, then give him a plan and show him how to bolt the corners together by burning a fine hole through with a red hot poker" (Smith, u.d.. p. 7).

6) Caring For Children[222]

As compared to other domestic tasks such as food production, clothes washing and sewing, boys were relatively active in the role of caregiver for younger children. Three of them, sixteen-year-old Percy Florence (1901) of Balmoral, Alberta, thirteen-year-old W.E. McIntyre (1902) of Oak River, Manitoba and eleven-year-old Harvey Brown (1902) of Portage la Prairie, Manitoba were involved in this type of work. They did not seem to mind looking after their siblings as Percy (1901, p. 569) indicated that he wanted to "help mother with her work in the house by minding baby for her" and W.E. McIntyre (1902, p. 506) stated that "in the house I churn, mind [the] baby, wash and dry dishes and many other things". Brown (1902) noted that he churned butter, washed dishes, swept the floor and set the table in addition to 'minding' the baby. However, the

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Her mother's inventiveness and her brother's labour thus provided the family with comfortable surroundings without the expenditure of their hard earned monetary resources, a valuable exercise in self-sufficiency.

Maryanne Caswell (1968) also reported the attempt of her family to create their own furniture but she noted that it was one of the more difficult jobs they had been assigned. Attempting to construct a baby-bed from freshly chopped green willow branches required both coordination and some technical skill, abilities that Maryanne was short of, but she did help with the construction of mattresses for use by all family members. These mattresses were made from "cotton ticks" (mattress sized 'bags' made of cotton with three sides sewn shut and one left open for insertion of stuffing material). These ticks were often filled with "prairie hay" (Caswell, 1968, p. 61), but as the wild hay cut on the prairies could contain a variety of plants from grass to grain to thistles or nettles, individual beds could be full of unpleasant surprises or be quite comfortable. This mattress making technique was confirmed by Elizabeth Woychyk who indicated that she helped to stuff cotton ticks when she was eight years old (Silverman, 1984). The only distinction was that in her family, straw from the harvested wheat was used for stuffing rather than hay. This meant fewer prickly weeds but as Elizabeth noted, "I remember the straw coming through the ticking, kind of scratchy" so comfort was relative (Silverman, 1984, p. 21).

[222] While 2 boys in the 9 to 11 group, 2 from the 12 to 14 group and 1 boy over 14 assisted with child-care, most of the work was handled by girls in the same age groups (Tables I and J, Appendix 2). Only 1 girl under 9 was involved in caring for their siblings or others as compared to 7 girls aged 9 to 11, 10 between 12 and 14 and 3 of the girls who were over 14 years of age.

enthusiastic participation of these three boys was a rarity as this work generally went to the girls in the family whether or not they were actually suited to the duty.

For example, as discussed earlier, the McNaught sisters, Isabel and Betty (1976), believed that their primary responsibilities lay in the productive sphere rather than in subsistence or domestic labour yet they make it clear that they also had substantial responsibilities 'in the home'. The girls cared for chickens, hauled water for a mile from the river to the house on a stone boat, herded the cattle to the river for water, helped with the food, worked in the garden, and assisted in the cleanup by washing dishes[223]. They also took care of a neighbor's two-year-old son so that their mother had some time to socialize with the baby's mother, but this turned into a minor disaster. They had never looked after a baby before and looked away after sitting the child on the second level bunk of their bunk-bed. As Betty described the situation:

> I guess I didn't watch him very carefully because he fell off and hit his head, an awful bang. And for years I worried whenever anybody said anything about Jess (the two year old) for fear he was stupid. I felt terrible about that (McNaught, 1976, p. 13).

Of course, not all children who cared for younger siblings or family friends were incompetent. Twelve-year-old Mabel Brown (1902) of Portage la Prairie,

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[223] With water having to be hauled over a fair distance, its use was rationed. As the dishwater would pick up scraps of food and grease from the family's plates and utensils, and as commercial soap would not have been used to clean dishes, Mrs. McNaught used the leftover dishwater as extra

Manitoba, for example, handled every type of household jobs including baking, cooking meals, washing, cleaning and caring for her younger siblings when they were babies. As they grew, her job continued but changed into watching for them and driving them to places they were supposed to be. Similarly, Florence Keeping (1902) was assigned to care for her baby brother when she was only nine years old but she had some help as her sister Blanche (1902) was three years older and carried the same duty. Between the two girls, the chore could be performed competently.

One of the youngest girls to be given the task of caring for other children was Mary Hiemstra (1997). In her published memoirs, Mary spoke of a fall day on which she reached the milestone of being asked to care for her siblings while her mother used the time to dig potatoes and haul them to the cellar they had dug under their house. The work had to be completed before freezing weather arrived if they were to have food for the winter, Mary's father was working off-farm, and the potato patch was over a half mile from the house so it would be too exhausting to carry both the youngest child and the excavated tubers both ways. Thus, there was little choice but to assign the child-care to Mary even though she was only six years old at the time. On the first day, Mary ran out of patience before her mother finished working and by the time she got home, all three children were tearing the house apart and banging on enamel bowls as if they were drums. The next day,

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nourishment for the pigs she was raising. The sisters also mention one of their older sisters conserving water by using the water from a vase of flowers to wash her face and clean her teeth.

her mother (Sarah) was not going to trust Mary to care for the younger children but Mary assured her that they would be better behaved that day so stifling her misgivings, Sarah headed for the potato patch to finish up the necessary fall harvest.

Mary took the youngsters outside to play, made a playhouse with four pieces of wood and built a miniature fireplace with stones. Intending to make up for her lack of care the day before, Mary determined that her mother would like a cup of tea when she got home and headed for the matches to light a fire after getting her charges toys to play with. Knocking the matches to the floor from a shelf she could not reach proved easy when she used a piece of wood to extend her reach, but the heavy stove covers and iron boiling pot proved more difficult. Muscling the lids open and filling the pot cup by cup on the stove put her in position to begin the tea. Wood was obtained by a trip to the chopping block to gather up chips and by striking "quite a few matches" that "flared green and yellow" from the sulfur tips, Mary got her fire going (Hiemstra, 1997, p. 191). After clearing some plants out of her baby-brother's mouth to stop his choking, she returned to setting the scene for her mother's supper.

Laying out a white table cloth over the box the family used for a table, Mary set up a tea service, carved some bread, spread jam on to the slightly misshaped pieces (the knife had been dull) and added wood to the fire to keep the water hot. As soon as her mother appeared with two pails of potatoes, she ran inside and poured water into the teapot and prepared to receive her mother's surprised gratitude:

> 'Tea!' Mother dropped the pails of potatoes and her face turned pale. 'You lit the fire?' Her voice was sharp. 'Yes. I had to light it to boil the kettle. I-I thought you'd like some tea.' I couldn't understand why she seemed upset when I thought she'd be pleased, and tears of disappointment came to my eyes. 'Yes,' Mother said quickly, 'of course I would. I was just thinking when I came around the grove how nice some tea would be'. She moved toward the stove, but slowly as if she was rather limp.... To my horror a stream of clear water came out of the curving spout. I had forgotten to put tea in the pot (Hiemstra, 1997, p. 192).

Being a perceptive mother, Sarah drank three cups of the 'weak tea' and over the next several days, provided the children with instruction on how to put out fires by rolling a person on the ground or in a blanket. Much to the disappointment of the children, they were not allowed to roll each other on the ground for practice.[224]

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[224] Sometimes children, regardless of their age, were not competent to care for their siblings and this was especially true in extreme cases. For instance, in her memoir Delia Bigelow Woolf suggested that she was born prematurely on the family homestead during the bitter winter of 1906-07. Had her care been delegated to siblings, it is unlikely that she would have survived as she was quite underdeveloped. She did not have any hair, her fingernails had not yet formed and she only weighed three pounds at birth. In Delia's words:

> I was so small and it was necessary to keep me alive. Baby incubators were something long in the future. So I was kept in a shoebox wrapped in cotton and a baby blanket, or I suppose just a small piece of cloth, and placed in the oven of a coal stove.... When I was old enough and able to breathe properly then Grandmother said that I could come out of the oven (Woolf, 1974, p. 7).

Given the nature of the care that was required, and the skills needed to keep the oven temperature moderate, only adults could be trusted with her existence.

7) Summary

Given that domestic labour would generally have required less physical strength than chopping down trees, moving rocks or harvesting crops, children were ideal workers, or would be, once they were old enough to properly follow basic directions. Further, as the effort devoted to completing this work was likely to be carried out in or near the home, it was expected that the labour would be performed by the women and their daughters rather than by the males in the family. However, the gendered division of labour that existed for adults was not as clearly defined for children and as such, a limited number of domestic tasks were carried out by children of both sexes.

The domestic work that was shared between genders was made up of the simplest of tasks requiring the least skill to complete. Basic housecleaning and minor jobs including washing dishes, sweeping floors and dusting were thus the primary domestic jobs for the majority of boys although a very limited number were involved with cooking, sewing and child-care. While some girls were also assigned to such limited roles, most girls tended to take on the more difficult tasks in the domestic sphere.

In particular, girls dominated the fields of sewing and child-care and also tended to have much more involvement with food preparation than their male counterparts. These were short-sighted applications of the social attitudes concerning 'women's work' as many of the young men raised on farms would eventually strike out on their own. These men, deprived of training throughout their childhood, would be incapable of feeding themselves anything but the most basic of foods and would not have the ability to fix even small holes in their coats or replace lost buttons. Even child care could prove to be a necessity for a man. This may seem a strange assertion given the division of labour between genders that was noted earlier, but maternal deaths were not uncommon (Langford, 1995) and a man could be left to care for one or more children. As such, absent skills could have serious consequences on their strength, stamina, health, and the health of their families.

While tasks within the home may not have been as physically wearing as field work for children, they were of importance as without decent food, clean clothing that was in decent repair, and a clean and comfortable living environment in which to live, morale would suffer and productivity and the will to continue could decline. As such, even the performance of simple domestic work by children could make a difference to the viability of the farm.

CHAPTER NINE

CONCLUSION

Canada's western prairies presented a variety of obstacles to block or slow the progress of those settlers seeking to take advantage of the opportunities present in the region. Only those individuals and families with strength, determination and persistence could overcome these impediments, survive the harsh conditions and establish ongoing farming operations in a technological regime founded on the use of human and animal muscle power. In such conditions, the labour of the English speaking boys and girls from four to sixteen years of age of primarily British Isle origin in this study would have been of assistance in achieving these goals.

However, even if all of the natural barriers could be breached, settlers were also faced with the prospect of trying to achieve financial security in a monopolized marketplace. Under these adverse economic circumstances, only three possible paths to family survival and security existed. Firstly, the production of wheat, livestock or other cash crops (depending on the type of farming operation being pursued) could be increased each year in the hope that this would generate a higher cash flow rather than simply reducing produce prices by creating an oversupply situation. Secondly, settlers could work outside of the production cycle to obtain funds with no connection to their farm operation, such as paid employment, trapping furs, or selling products other than wheat and cattle. Thirdly, settlers and their families could intensify their efforts to supply as many of their own needs as possible and restrict their acquisition of goods and services to what was absolutely necessary. Cash reserves could thus be built up or at the very least, expenditures could be reduced, thereby helping the farming operation to survive. Each of these alternatives required the expenditure of labour, but as indicated by Lewis (1996, p. 5) children "were a cheap and readily accessible source of labour" for farm families.

As revealed by the stories of the study children, child labour would have been of assistance to the family effort no matter which of these paths was followed. Table K in Appendix 2 reveals that 87 of 131 boys in the study population (72%), and 39 of 122 girls (32%) worked at the various tasks necessary to production[225] while 48 boys and 33 girls (37% and 27% of their gender's study population respectively) took part in paid employment or other money-raising activities. Children's efforts could also prove valuable to the family if they worked at domestic and subsistence tasks. By providing labour for subsistence tasks, the 53 boys (40%) and 62 girls (51%) either increased the food and other necessary commodities available to the family or freed up some or all of the time an adult would otherwise have expended on such survival tasks. This would be no small contribution as even if a total cash crop failure occurred, sufficient effort applied to subsistence could keep the family alive (Neth, 1995; Fontain and Schlumbohm, 2000; and Humphries, 1982) until the next crop was harvested.

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[225] Even if production could not be increased, child labour could reduce the cost of production and thus improve profits. For example, William Rand, a twelve year old from Crystal City, Manitoba, wrote that he could personally handle a variety of tasks and he recognized that by doing so, he was helping to produce the family's market crop and being "a great help to [his] father on the farm… [as it saved the cost of] hired help" (1901, p. 598). Similarly, a twelve year old girl named Amelia Johnson (1902, p. 506) reported that the previous fall, her "father was short on a man at stacking the grain so I built the loads on the wagons and brother pitched them". These children thus provided both productive labour and eliminated the expense of the hired hand whose wages would have been a drain on the revenue obtainable from the crop.

Child labour power directed at the performance of domestic tasks required for the comfort, morale and replenishment of the family would be of importance for the same reasons. Labour cannot continue indefinitely without rest, water, food, clothing, and health care. By providing these services, the 17 boys (13%) and 89 girls (73%) referred to in Table K, Appendix 2 assisted their families greatly. While these figures relate to the study population and not other groups of settlers or children, it is logical to assume that similar results could be obtained by non-English speaking (non-British) families on private farms if they were prepared to use their children's labour in the same way and invest the time necessary to train them for the necessary work.

In determining which path to follow when establishing and operating an ongoing farming operation, settlers had to be conscious of the characteristics of the area of the prairies in which they were settling. The different geographic, climatic and soil type zones that existed offered different resources for use and presented different obstacles that had to be overcome if the struggle to survive and farm was to succeed. This circumstance implies that in different areas of the region, children may have been performing tasks suited to different production conditions on the prairies but the information garnered through analysis of the historical documents in this study was not sufficient to confirm the existence of such a division among the study children. This may be a result of a similarity in the work handled by children across the region, with all children dealing with animals, crops, gardens, hauling water, obtaining fuel and so on as, despite distinctions between zones, certain basic work must be performed. Alternatively, it could be an effect of the shortcomings of historical research. In other words, the general lack of detail in the documents (very few children noted the amount of work done, just the nature of the tasks performed) may disguise differences in the quantity of work performed in different zones rather than in the type of labour itself. Children in the dry south may have assisted in planting 10 acres while those in more hospitable zones planted 50 acres. Those in the south may have cared for 100 cattle while those in zones more suited to wheat farming cared for 10 head of livestock. Without greater detail in the documents, such differences would have been hidden. In addition, the number of children writing memoirs and other documents may have been lower in the southern prairies as Palliser's Triangle had the worst climate and soil for wheat production and consistently had the lowest population concentration on the prairies (Dawson and Younge, 1940). With fewer documents written, the number of documents that survived the last century to be transferred to archives for public access would likely be lower as well, thus reducing the chances of obtaining materials that may have revealed such labour distinctions.

Despite the hardships that had to be endured, the statistics set out earlier indicate that many hundreds of thousands of individuals, some in family groupings and some on their own, did manage to establish ongoing farming operations in the region and achieve their dream of land ownership, either through homesteading or purchase. The growing number of farms in the prairie region during the study period, the expanding population, and increased agricultural production all made this apparent. However, looking at the statistics alone does not provide any sense of how settlers managed to persevere despite the hardships they faced. Based on the reports of the study children and those researchers who have studied the matter such as Warren (1917), the amount of labour that had to be poured into the operations to convert undeveloped territory into grain, livestock, income, shelter, subsistence and domestic arrangements for the settlers and their families was immense. These settlers had to work day after day, week after week, year after year with no guarantee of success or survival yet they carried on despite the problems. The memoir of Mabel Hawthorne provides at least a partial explanation for their actions. When she, her mother and her father migrated to live near Saskatoon, Saskatchewan in 1905, they faced numerous problems. Washed out bridges, heat, cold, dust, rain, windstorms, prairie fires and all of the hard work and economic deprivation that came with breaking the land, building a sod house and growing wheat for an export market that paid back barely enough for the family to survive all blocked their path, but to Mabel, it was their belief in and hope for a better future that:

> gave us strength to overcome the unsurmountable barriers in making a home of which called forth every oz. of physical strength we had to give. How did we do it?

> Baking dozens of loaves of bread, making our own butter, caring for chickens and turkeys, and gardens, milking cows, making our own soap, pickling our own pork for smoking and canning and preserving under almost primitive conditions, doing our own sewing for our family didn't leave much time for dreaming, and yet dreams were there engrossed in our homes, we accepted all that went with it. But always dreaming of better days to come (Hawthorne, u.d., p. 4).

While belief, faith or hope for the future may have been the spirit driving the push into the prairie region and the fight to succeed, this study has revealed that one of the assets that made the fight against nature and greed possible was the labour power of the children in the region. The social attitudes that prevailed among at least the British settlers, and the fact that in such conditions many could not afford the luxury of feeding and clothing children who did not contribute to the family welfare led to the acceptance of child labour as a family resource. Letters, newspaper articles, and the behavior of farm parents in putting their children to work all revealed that this attitude was supported by both farmers and the general public.[226] Work would also serve to initiate children into farming as a potential career, provide them with skills, and ready them to take over the family farm or establish their own operation when they turned eighteen and qualified to apply for their own quarter section of homestead land.

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[226] Children were meant to toil for the good of their families, yet overworking a child by making their days seem like "[a] thousand chores from house to barn, like… [an] endless chain" (Mitchell, 1900, p. 69) was also looked down on by many. A balance of work and other activity was the key to benefiting the family and the child without driving children away from the occupation. While messages advocating leisure for children were rare, this does not mean that children were overworked or abused on farms. Only a few such as Doris Thomson (1979, p. 1) indicated in any way that they might be overworked and in her case, mentioning that "the continuous repetition of such jobs became a chore" seems more a complaint of boredom than stress from contributing too much. However, it is also possible that the documents prepared by children were self-censored to avoid the mention of negative unpleasant memories but this seems a remote possibility for two reasons. Firstly, only Mitchell and one Barnardo boy who felt like a slave had anything negative to say about the amount of work performed. No other child even mentioned being overly busy and the tone in most of the materials was happy. Secondly, it seems unlikely that a diary or memoir

As was made apparent by the various memoirs, diaries and letters, children who accompanied their parents or relatives to the prairies, and those who were born in the west, did not have the chance for an idle life. The family's labour power was its chance for survival and its source of potential wealth and children were put to work in support of both goals. Almost every document studied was found to refer to work activities that contributed to at least one aspect of the labour required to keep farming operations under way but even so, children were not thrown haphazardly into any task that happened to be on hand. Their lack of size and skills meant that periods for learning and gaining both physical and mental prowess had to be allowed for before children could handle difficult and physically challenging jobs.

Based on the patterns of work data revealed in the documents, it appears that children gained experience by assisting their parents with day-to-day chores and simple tasks that they could perform without unnecessary risk and assumed more responsibility as they grew more competent. For example, peeling potatoes seemed a somewhat common chore for younger girls (8 and under), as did cleaning dishes, sweeping, and milking (Appendix 2, Tables G and I). For boys in the same

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would have carried on a deception when the document would either have been assumed to be private or was written after the fact when disclosure of something innocuous such as how hard the age group, washing dishes or performing other types of housework were uncommon activities but milking cows, gardening, obtaining fuel and hunting gophers were equivalent junior level tasks (Appendix 2, Tables H and J). These jobs would develop the children's confidence, build coordination and strength, encourage them to recognize the necessity of work from an early age, and prepare them for the work to come. As shown by Table L of Appendix 2, 'graduation' from simple work to involvement in a greater variety of more difficult jobs occurred once children reached the 9 to 11 year age grouping and increased again for those between 12 and 14 years of age and again for those over 14 (in proportional terms).

Of course, not all children could handle all tasks. Each required different skills or attributes. For example, a task such as felling and hauling logs required brute strength, perseverance was needed by those collecting the tiny wild strawberries that might not fill a cup after a morning's work, while a delicate touch would be a necessity for those assigned to child-care duties. The necessary abilities for the wide range of tasks performed were not possessed by all children. They had to be learned through study and practice or acquired by observing the actions of the parents. As such, the data was analyzed to determine whether age effects on the types of tasks handled could be located. As discussed above, the amount of involvement with work increased with age but for individual sub-categories of work, the indications were not as clear. For example, within child-

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writer worked would have drawn no retribution.

care, girls appear to become more active as they age with 7 of those between 9 and 11 reporting such work along with 10 girls in the next older age grouping as compared to only 1 girl in the 6 to 8 group (Table I, Appendix 2). However, there is no way to determine from the data whether this was a result of training needs, or simply an increase in the number of siblings needing care as settler children grew older.

The situation is less ambiguous in other work sub-categories, for example the participation of girls in all other domestic tasks appears to increase with age (Table I, Appendix 2), as is also the case with working on animal products, gardening, and collecting wild produce for family subsistence (Table G, Appendix 2). Involvement in raising their own animals for sale and in family livestock production also increased with age for girls (Tables E and C, Appendix 2). The situation for boys was quite similar as, although very few boys worked in domestic areas, the figures for boys involved in the raising of animal products in the subsistence category (Table H, Appendix 2) revealed a substantial increase in participation for boys above the 6 to 8 year old grouping (and thus suggested that training or physical development was needed for this work). Similarly, the number of boys involved in raising animals for sale in the entrepreneurship category climbed with age from 3 boys in the 6 to 8 year old group, to 18 in the 12 to 14 year age bracket (Table F, Appendix 2). The second major difference between boys and girls was that in the productive labour category, the pattern of participation increasing with age existed in field work, horse related tasks, and in jobs associated with market livestock production (Table D, Appendix 2). The pattern was not as clear for girls as fewer girls than boys provided this type of labour, and the differences between age groups were thus less distinctive.

In addition to receiving training for particular jobs, children were also influenced by parental behavior and attitudes about work and the farming lifestyle. The clearest example of this acquisition of knowledge and behaviors between generations was the fact that it could extend even into the games that children made up to play. For example, one child indicated that:

> One of our favorite games that first winter was 'filing on land'. The house was not insulated, and our fuel was poor. There was very little wood, and lignite coal in those days left much to be desired for heat… We would eat our breakfasts, then pop back into bed to await more heat. On the bed were mother's patchwork quilts. They were made of bright print pieces. We took turns in choosing our favorite patch. We said we 'filed' on it, as we had heard our parents talk of choosing land. If we saw one that we liked better, we had to 'throw up' the first choice, and someone else could claim it…. Hour after hour we played that game, and it seemed ever new (Carr, u.d., p. 2).

Alternatively, more formal lessons could also prove useful for developing skills that required more knowledge than could be passed on by observation and play. Sewing, for instance, was a very practical skill, particularly if a girl could be taught to make clothing, as a great deal of money could be saved on store bought items (Colinette, 1898).

While girls were expected to remain in a home setting (whether with her family, a husband or as a paid servant) and were thus directed into work related to domestic tasks and subsistence labour, the type of male child envisioned as being best for the prairie settlement process was quite different. Boys required just as many skills as girls (although in different areas of endeavor) and also had to be strong, hardworking and honest. Just as the qualities 'appropriate' to girls were highlighted in the poem "The Farmer's Daughter" (Anonymous, 1899a) set out in Chapter Eight, the corresponding male attributes were captured in a poem printed in The Nor'-West Farmer under the title "The Boys We Need":

> Here's to the boy who's not afraid
> To do his share of the work;
> Who never is by toil dismayed,
> And never tries to shirk.
>
> The boy who's heart is brave to meet
> All lions in his way;
> Who's not discouraged by defeat,
> But tries another day.
>
> The boy who always means to do
> The very best he can;
> Who always keeps the right in view,
> And aims to be a man.
>
> Such boys as these will grow to be
> The men who's hands will guide
> The future land: and we
> Shall speak their names with pride.
> (Anonymous, 1898, p. 528).

Based on such social beliefs and the work patterns discerned in the data on children's work behaviour, a double standard obviously existed with respect to social attitudes toward farm children as a result of their gender. The same social attitudes that encouraged a division of labour between adults thus carried over to the distribution of children's work although the stringent split with men handling production and financial matters, while women looked after domestic duties and subsistence production (assisting with 'men's work' on request) does not appear to be as absolute for children. Once they outgrew the basic tasks that all youngsters of both genders performed, the data indicates that a tendency toward some specialized labour for each sex existed such that girls dominated domestic work (with 89 girls as opposed to 17 boys working in this area) and were strong in subsistence (62 girls and 53 boys), while boys were more involved in entrepreneurial labour (48 boys and only 33 girls) and dominated production (87 boys to 39 girls) (Table K, Appendix 2).

Given the levels of participation in the various forms of work revealed in the children's documents, girls appeared to have been more flexible as workers than boys. For example, in the two cases of obvious gender dominance, more girls crossed the gender line to take up productive labour than boys (who assisted with domestic tasks). However, it would have been the children capable of taking on labour in any field of endeavor (whether or not they were acting within their gendered role) who would have been of greatest assistance and thus contributed the most to ensuring the continuance of the family farm. Each area of work was vital in and of itself, but for the greatest effectiveness in the family response to harsh conditions, those children capable of filling many roles would have been most valued as workers. From the materials reviewed, this would have included a large number of the study children as many listed at least two, and some three or four tasks, as being within their capabilities.[227]

In terms of the specific tasks undertaken by boys and girls in support of family efforts to farm in the prairie region, the most confusing, from a gender perspective, was participation in the construction of the family home and other buildings. Whether the family built using logs, sod, lumber or clay/hay mixtures to form adobe structures, the work was physically demanding. Felling, hauling, notching and lifting logs, digging, hauling and lifting thousands of sod 'bricks', lifting, positioning and nailing boards or excavating, mixing and applying clay all took strength and endurance. Some jobs (such as chinking cracks) were less tiring, but both boys and girls noted taking part in all phases of the process. It could be that parents were humoring their children by letting them think they were truly helping or that the jobs they helped with were actually less demanding than the children described. However, stories of digging cellars, dragging heavy sod bricks, felling trees in freezing weather, dragging logs out of the forest and lifting and balancing logs while they were notched with an axe, all rang true. These children of both sexes certainly contributed to family labour needs and 'earned their keep' after being brought to the prairies.

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[227] As shown in Table L of Appendix 2, the number of reports of participation in the four types of labour within each age group column is at least double the total number of individuals (whether boys or girls) from the study population in each age group. The only exceptions were the 3 children who were only 4 or 5 years old as between them, there were only two indications of involvement in labour. For the older groups, this suggests that each child participated in at least two types of labour but within each labour category, particular children may have worked at several tasks. For example, a child who cared for siblings, prepared food, cleaned the house, planted a garden, hauled water, collected berries for the family to eat and churned butter would have been quite busy and without doubt, making a major contribution to the farm, but Table L would record only two entries, one for domestic and one for entrepreneurial labour.

Given the information set out above, it is clear that the children in the study both could, and did in fact, contribute their labour to family efforts to farm in the prairie region, but the reason they did so was not as simple to determine. Certainly, societal pressure to work would have been of some influence, as might a feeling of obligation to the parents for their support, or threats of punishment for those not performing up to the standards of the family patriarch. However, no threats or actual instances of punishment were recorded, and no indications suggesting that children might feel an obligation to work (beyond the existence of the family bond) were noted. These 'missing' indicators could be explained as instances of selective memory recollection or an idealization of childhood but there is no way to be certain. Of course, socialization was also an influence on child behaviour as shown by the transmission of the gendered division of labour that affected adults to the children, and the training of children in necessary skills. Each factor may thus have had some impact on children's work behaviour, but no single explanation for why children (apparently voluntarily) worked on all aspects of farm development and operation was revealed in the documents.

Rather, the information gathered suggests that virtually all children in the study worked in some fashion, their family farms benefited financially, and family members benefited emotionally from these efforts. As such, the most likely explanation for children working may well have been a pragmatic choice rather than an idealistic belief in duty, fear of authority, or parental and social influence. Food, water, shelter and security would only exist if the necessary labour was performed or, as noted by Lucy Johnson "can't milk means no milk", and as such, children learned to help (Johnson, u.d., p. 36). Listening to parental conversations, observing other settlers, and experiencing prairie conditions would all provide children with sufficient information to realize how difficult life was and thus, motivation to work hard to improve their lives and those of the rest of the family. Self-interest, if not an organized family survival strategy, would push most children old enough to understand the situation to work and others would follow.

The need for every possible survival tool, including the labour of their children, was made clear in a report prepared for the Canadian Council of Agriculture by its secretary, R. McKenzie in 1914. He analyzed the financial impacts of the forces arrayed against settlers and reached a conclusion concerning the prairie pioneer period similar to that of Fontaine and Schlumbohm (2000) who had dealt with the survival of farm families during historical periods of severe economic downturn in Europe.[228] Family survival was being maintained through the efforts of every member capable of any type of work and it was being accomplished outside of the market system.

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[228] It was found that the economic value of production fell below the level necessary to provide minimal subsistence for the population during a number of years but death rates did not escalate to

McKenzie (1914) had access to better records than Fontaine and Schlumbohm, and had the benefit of living during the period he studied. As such, he could trace the economic situation more closely but even so, he found nothing except family sacrifice and hard work to account for survival under what should have been disastrous financial conditions. As such, the apparent success of prairie farming in terms of the growth in the number of farms, farmers, and output came without financial benefits for farmers when the relative profit margins and rates of return on investment for manufacturers and farmers were considered. His research indicated that the decade of fast rising population between 1901 and 1911 was extremely beneficial for Canadian businesses but was at best neutral for the average farmer. Based on census information, McKenzie calculated that business net earnings (gross income less all raw material costs, power charges, wages paid and all other expenses of operation) on capitalization (the dollar value of all outstanding company shares at the issue price) for manufacturers grew from 19.82 per cent in 1901 to 25.75 per cent in 1911. As such, businesses had, on average, achieved a growth rate of 30 per cent over the decade. For farmers, however, the situation was much different. Gross earnings (the total income generated by farming operations without considering the cost of inputs) dropped from 18.55 per

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the degree that Fontaine and Schlumbohm (2000) anticipated given the economic upheaval they were studying. No welfare system existed and as such, families had to have been working outside cent to 17.5 per cent of the total capital investment made by farmers. The difference was actually larger than made apparent by the numbers as comparatively low per farm capital investment levels would have made for a smaller denominator when the earnings ratios were calculated.[229] As McKenzie (1914, p. 32) noted:

> manufacturers' net earnings increased in the decade, while the farmer's gross earnings decreased, notwithstanding the cost of production to the farmer had vastly increased during that period. The farmer's raw material consisting of seeds, manure, and other fertilizers, feed of animals fed in excess of maintenance to produce flesh, milk, eggs and wool and to perform labour, is not taken into account, though the value of food raised on the farm and fed on the farm is included in gross revenue. The farmer's own labour and that of his family, like his raw material, is not counted. Were the value of the farmer's raw material, together with wages for himself and members of his family, deducted from the ascertained gross revenue, there would be nothing left for interest on his investment.

Given these figures, farmers had a choice of earning no profit at all on the 'farming side' of the ledger or reducing or eliminating the 'salaries' for all family members and leaving no income to support the family's lifestyle. This was equivalent to saying that farms could not have survived during the first decade of

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of the market, the only unrecorded source of subsistence available.

[229] It is important to note that for many farmers, the capital invested in farming was much smaller than would have been required to establish a manufacturing company of equivalent size. Farmers could obtain their land, the most valuable portion of their investment, from the government at low or no cost. This would have increased the apparent profitability of a farm as, for example, earning

the century as either the family, or the farm, would have been without the wherewithal to continue. 'Salaries' for the family translated into food, clothing, footwear, bedding, coal for heat, lumber or other materials to build improved homes and other necessities, thereby quite literally being the difference between life and death. However, 'profits' were also required for a variety of purposes in the farming operation. The purchase of new seed and stock, buying improved tools or equipment to enhance the efficiency and size of the operation and most importantly, building up a reserve for the repair or replacement of worn equipment without which a farm could not survive and prosper, could not be done without profits.

Unfortunately, and as was the case with the periods of economic disaster studied by Fontaine and Schlumbohm (2000), (and with respect to the studies of the work of women on pioneer farms), no official or unofficial records were kept of children's hours of work (or for that matter time devoted to play or personal matters), or of the division of their time between tasks. Thus, no exact measurement of the amount of children's labour devoted to farm and family needs is feasible and it is therefore impossible to prove the degree to which children's labour assisted family survival. The diaries, memoirs, letters and other documents reviewed in this study did provide anecdotal evidence of the types of work children performed but they were not specific enough to enable an accurate

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of $850 against an investment of $500 would show a better result than the same earning against a total investment of $820 ($500 plus a land cost of $2 per acre for a 160 acre homestead).

evaluation of the amount of labour performed. The few references to how difficult a task might be or to the number of hours or days it might take to accomplish a particular goal (for example cutting, stacking and hauling sufficient hay for a family's animals) provided some of the information needed but seldom specified the exact work done by each person. Further the effort put into each endeavor by the children and the level of skill that they possessed for their different jobs would also have to be known to develop a measure of the contribution children made. Finally, as children were not paid a wage for family work, no convenient socially accepted artificial measure of the value of their labour existed.

However, while it may be impossible to locate detailed information on the exact size of the labour contribution made by children, it has not been difficult to establish the fact that some children did in fact make contributions to family efforts and that these contributions were of value or importance to the families involved. It is also possible to show logically that these contributions were of monetary value and thus assisted family farms in achieving their goal of overcoming the hostile economic climate they faced.

With respect to the first point, little more need be said about the fact of the contributions made by the study children. As shown by Tables C to L in Appendix 2, their participation in farm labour was such that at least one, and most often several children had performed or assisted with the performance of virtually every job required on pioneer farms. This broad statement, that the study proves that almost every child could make some valued contribution, may be challenged on the basis that the sample of children is too small or that the children may have been exaggerating, embellishing, idealizing, hiding or forgetting the truth of their experiences. The limitation placed on the study by the fragmentary nature of the data available through historical documentation may also be a concern. However, each such critique, at least with respect to conclusions reached relating to the work these children performed, falters in the face of the consistency of the stories. These children had no particular reason to exaggerate or hide anything except, perhaps, for some of the more unpleasant memories of their childhood. As such, and aside from what might be childish exaggeration by the one four-year-old who suggested that he had handled almost every farm task on his own, it may be more logical to suggest that children reported less work than they actually performed. Forgetting about tasks that were boring, disagreeable or repulsive (not one child referred to changing or washing diapers, no reports of digging or re-filling holes for outhouses were made, and only 6 children noted cleaning stables in Tables C and D of Appendix 2) is logical, but small-scale exaggeration by adding one or two innocuous activities that would make little difference to the story being told or to the reputation of the author, is not.

Aside from the one little boy, none of the children claimed mastery of everything, no one admitted handling some tasks, and most focused on the particular tasks that they enjoyed or were assigned in their writings. As such, the vast majority of documents had nothing to draw suspicion to their contents. Given the consistency of the stories provided by these settler farm children, the documents provide an interconnected web of support for each other that speaks to the essential validity and reliability of the writings of these children. There is no indication that any of these children, with the exception of siblings, ever met and as such, their stories could not have been coordinated to redefine the historical record respecting children's labour, nor is there any reason to expect that anyone would do so as the stories of childhood work activities are not the sort of expose that could affect the wealth, fame or reputation of the authors. Further, there is no indication of contradictory data in public records and little sense of deliberate deception on the part of the children even with respect to their own activities. In short, deliberate distortions respecting the work of children are unlikely to have occurred but minor exaggerations and withholdings of information likely exist, as is the case with any historical research. This is unlikely to distort the overall picture developed in the study and attempting to 'compensate' for such concerns or to revamp the idealistic or self-congratulatory tone of some of the documents would do more harm than good.

With the fact of children performing necessary work established, logic leads to the conclusion that in addition to being of importance or value to the farm families themselves, the labour contributions must also have been of monetary value to the family. This is evident, as without children's labour, work would have either been abandoned, left incomplete, or dealt with by an adult. At the least, this would have been inconvenient or added more work time to an already busy day. At the worst, it may have cost the family the loss of several acres of crop or the expense of a hired-hand's wages. Such work cannot have been valueless as it either contributed to output or reduced expenditures in a direct or indirect fashion. The value may be unrecorded and (now) unmeasurable but it did exist and may be conservatively estimated by using an estimated of the minimum hours a child would have worked each day, a wage rate typical for farm workers at the turn of the century, and the population statistics noted in Table B of Appendix 1.

By 1911, there were almost one third of a million children living in the prairie provinces.[230] This would be equivalent to approximately one child per family and if each child worked only one hour per day (once again a bare minimum figure given references to the types of work done each day by most children) a family would obtain the equivalent of forty six (eight working hour) days per year from each child. On a regional basis, this would translate to 13.5 million (eight hour) days worth of work per year. Using the actual number of children in the region would increase the figures substantially, as would using a more realistic estimate of the hours per day spent working, but the point being made is that even with these conservative estimates, children's labour was more than a convenience to farm families. With the amount of work to be done on a non-mechanized farm, even ignoring the economic concerns they faced, adults would have been hard-pressed to make up for the loss of that amount of labour.

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[230] Only those between four and fourteen are considered children for the purpose of this calculation as the population information set out by Statistics Canada placed 15 and 16 year old individuals in the adult grouping for reporting purposes. Further, the intent is to determine the minimum impact that children had. Opening the category to include those up to sixteen would increase the number of children substantially.

The monetary value of one day's work might only be one dollar but for the times, $46 would have been a fair bit of money to replace each year (being 1/6th of the cost of a one year supply of food in 1912)[231] and on a regional basis, the loss would have been immense.

Given the information generated in this study, it is evident that many children did in fact work on pioneer farms, and that the work they performed contributed to satisfying a need for labour and provided a perceptible, if not measurable, financial benefit for settler families.[232] However, these children received no monetary compensation for their efforts, just 'room and board', possessed only assets given to them voluntarily, and had little or no control over their lives. They had no right to make contracts, control their own money or even choose which parent they wished to live with in the event of a divorce.[233] Further, children had no right to obtain homesteads and could even be sent to relatives (rather than remain with their mother) if the father died, as full control over the family children was granted to him. These legal provisions were contained in The Dominion Lands Act, (1872, Canada), and An Ordinance Respecting the Administration of Civil Justice, (1886, North-West Territories) and while rules changed constantly, mothers did not begin to have control over the lives of their children until 1918 when The Infants Act, (1918-19, Saskatchewan) was passed and other jurisdictions began to loosen restrictions on women. The effect was such that children were in an even worse position than their mothers in terms of being seen to have made an economic contribution to farming. They were almost literally the property of their father and completely powerless while their mothers at least had some limited protections of their property and status as independent beings.

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[231] See the discussion by McNaught (1976) at footnote 193.

[232] As with women, children's labour was unvalued and thus invisible to the economy (Sachs, 1983).

Given his role historical, legal, social, and moral authority, the employer/father utilized the labour power of his children to provide subsistence, domestic comfort, cash, and marketable commodities for the farm. For the reasons set out above, the economic contribution was not recognized but as children were also contributing to their own subsistence needs, the value of their labour on commodities had to have been higher than the portion of their subsistence costs the father would have 'paid'. The excess value of the saleable commodities over the cost of the children's needs, plus any cost savings generated by the effectively free labour of children, was appropriated by the father. This provided the asset needed for investment in the capital base of the operation (land and equipment) and for his own benefit. The fact that family bonds of affection and obligation existed and that fathers were simply exercising the acceptable financial control granted them without malice does not mean that exploitation did not exist, just as a belief that work was enjoyable or being performing voluntarily did not change the fact

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[233] See Ursel (1992) and Rollings-Magnusson (1999) for particulars on the actions of the federal and provincial governments that supported the patriarchal family system that kept both women and

that women's labour was also appropriated by their husbands under similar circumstances (Folbre, 1982; and Ursel, 1992). Thus, just as farm women were relegated to the position of being economically 'invisible' workers with their contributions screened within the family (Stansell, 1976; Wilson, 1982; Sachs, 1983; Whatmore, 1991), so to were children.

Overall, this study has revealed the circumstances and stories of farm children who worked on the Canadian prairies during the early periods of prairie settlement. The nature and importance of their contributions to their families and thus the development process has not previously been understood but it may now be concluded that hardworking children, or at least those primarily of British Isle descent, contributed to all aspects of family farming including the production of items for sale and for family consumption. In addition, they used their labour to earn money from sources beyond the family and to maintain living conditions that would ensure survival and as much comfort as possible under the circumstances. This analysis of historical documents has thus shed light on aspects of children's behaviour that have seldom been subjected to organized scrutiny and contributed to the expansion of the knowledge base respecting the Canadian development process.

The actual extent of the economic contribution made by children will never be known given the scarcity of records other than anecdotal reports such as those

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children under the control of the male head of the household.

utilized in this study. Even so, the veil that has hidden the economic impact of children behind a screen of standard accounting practices, legal ownership of assets and a discounting of children's efforts to the status of secondary chores, has been shifted to the side. Children were outnumbered by adults in the prairie region, out-muscled while performing physically demanding work, out-skilled by their parents when learning new jobs and overlooked by record keepers, economists and to a large degree by historians. But the children whose documents have been studied show that children could develop new abilities, learn, and contribute in the new environments just as adults did. They may not have played as large a role as adults, but they were a factor and thus deserve to be part of the record of this historical period. Their efforts should not remain relegated to the level of the meaningless or trivial as children were contributing members of the families that together built an agricultural society in the west.

This study also suggests that the roots of the gendered division of labour among adults lie in the working patterns established during childhood and hints at the existence of an age-based division as well. In effect, the data suggest that children started their farming careers as equals, performing tasks suited to individuals of younger ages. It is when simple tasks requiring little coordination and strength, for example gathering eggs, pulling weeds, washing dishes, or gathering buffalo chips end and more difficult labour begins that gender becomes a factor. Females concentrate to a greater extent on tasks such as cooking and washing clothes, while males focus more on plowing, planting crops and harvesting the grain. Each of these contributions is important to our understanding of the social and economic history of Canada but the tool created to focus the study on aspects of children's labour contributions, that is, the labour typology, is also of value as it may be used when conducting future studies.

The Labour Typology and Directions For Further Research

In creating the labour typology to categorize children's working behaviours for analysis, a number of decisions and compromises had to be made to ensure its usefulness. At the outset the level of complexity had to be established as, while detailed information on the children who planted wheat as opposed to oats or carrots might prove useful for some purposes, creating hundreds of categories of work behaviour would do little to organize the data into a reasonable number of usable groupings for study. Similarly compressing work behaviours too tightly, for example by dividing labour into productive and domestic categories as is done in gender studies, would arguably be too simplistic as the detail of children's efforts would be lost in such a restricted field.

Particulars of the decision-making process used in developing the typology were discussed in chapter three and had the result of establishing four main categories of labour to organize the data: 1) productive labour; 2) entrepreneurial labour; 3) subsistence labour; and 4) domestic labour. Each category had a number of sub-categories that provided greater detail on the work activity undertaken. Admittedly, these categories could have been more restricted and focused on 'traditional' groupings. Entrepreneurial labour could be interpreted to be an aspect of productive work, and subsistence activities could be subsumed in the domestic label as they add to the comfort and well-being of the family. However, depending on how restrictive the definitions of even productive and domestic labour are, virtually every activity could be compressed into the productive category. Secombe (1973), for example, argued that domestic labour was actually productive despite counter-arguments by theorists such as Fox (1980) who left domestic labour in its own category. In reality, no attempt to categorize behaviour into a logical and useful format will suit every researcher as each will have their own ideas of what characteristics are of importance and how best to organize data for study.

By taking intent and context into account, activities that might otherwise be seen only as a minor aspect of domestic chores, for example picking fruit and vegetables, can be analyzed more intensively. One child may have been gathering vegetables and fruit for supper while a second was earning money for the family by collecting fruit to sell and the third was assisting with the production of a marketable item by gathering plants for animal feed. The ability to place a single physical act in three different categories based on the context of the situation or the intent of the child could lead to confusion or errors in the data base but provided that the rules for allocating data to particular categories are clearly defined, this should not pose an insurmountable problem. Further, this flexibility enabled me to use the typology to classify physical behaviour by its contribution to family well-being and provide a more refined understanding of labour activities than would be possible with a simple productive/non-productive dichotomy.

As the typology is currently defined, the tool is useful only in the analysis of labour within families and would not provide the details needed to understand, for example, the labour of paid employees. Few would be hired to provide a combination of work in the field and the home (although domestic servants and field hands could be employed separately) and none would return wages from outside jobs or product sales to the family coffers as expected of entrepreneurial labourers in the present typology. It would also be of little assistance in analyzing the paid labour activities of non-farming children under present day circumstances as only entrepreneurial (paid) and domestic labour from the typology would be of importance.

The typology could, however, be used to conduct a comparative historical analysis of child labour in various regions of the country to determine whether children contributed to all four categories. For example, investigation could be conducted into the work of children in a resource-dependent economy such as the Maritimes, and the results could be compared to the farming families involved in wheat production in the west. A cross-border comparison with activities in the American west or other staple producing regions could also prove interesting as it might be possible to study the impact of political or climatic influences on labour activities. Additional research respecting the pioneer era directed at refining the differences between age groups and genders, assessing differences in work behaviour between cultural groups, or expanding the typology to categorize types of labour common to the farming 'collectives' of cultural/religious groups would also enhance our knowledge of the pioneer period and help to place the work of children within a context of labour divisions within society. Generational studies could also be conducted to delve into the evolution in children's labour during the war years when fathers and older brothers may have volunteered for the army, during the depression when climatic factors altered the prairie landscape, or during the 1990s to assess the impact of the 20th Century's shift to high technology. In each of these scenarios, the studies could be conducted using historical documentation but for those efforts respecting more recent periods, documents could be supplemented by interviews with survivors and additional detail could be obtained on types of work, the amount of work performed, attitudes toward work and the economic value of the work.

The results of the current study of English speaking children primarily of British Isle descent, may also be used as a benchmark against which such additional results could be compared and as a base on which to build a fuller story of child labour during the pioneer period. The comparative value of these results and the typology itself could be expanded into the present time if the topics of study were carefully chosen to fit within the limits of the typology's effectiveness. For example, there would be little value in studying current paid work activities but addressing the work of children in current farming families or the labour of children who work with their parents in family–owned restaurants or convenience stores would be possible with adjustments to the productive category to reflect the more likely 'productive' tasks such as stocking shelves, pricing goods, cooking pizzas or serving customers. These activities may not fit within the narrow confines of a more traditional definition of productive activity (creating a commodity for sale) but for families working in their own businesses, these activities would have the same effect, generating income by selling their services, skills and goods to others. Similarly, the typology could be used in a comparative analysis of labour activities in developing countries where family level farming under less-mechanized conditions continues to exist with little modification of the labour categories. In each of these cases, much more detailed information could be obtained and the work of children could be enhanced not only in the historical record, but in the contemporary record as well.

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APPENDIX ONE

TABLE A

POPULATION: 1871-1911

	1871	**1881**	**1891**	**1901**	**1911**
Manitoba	25,228	62,260	152,506	255,211	455,614
North West Territories	48,000	56,446	98,967	20,129	17,196
Saskatchewan	*	*	*	91,279	492,432
Alberta	*	*	*	73,022	374,663
TOTAL	**73,228**	**118,706**	**251,473**	**439,641**	**1,339,908**

Source: 5th Census of Canada, 1911, Tables V and VII

*Included with the population of the North West Territories

TABLE B

POPULATION OF THE PRAIRIE PROVINCES AND NORTH WEST TERRITORIES BY SEX AND CHILD OR ADULT STATUS: 1881-1911

Province/	1881			1891			1901			1911		
Status	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female
MANITOBA												
****Adult**	36,434	21,910	14,524	89,598	52,224	37,374	157,537	89,104	68,433	298,667	169,945	128,722
*****Child**	16,294	8,548	7,746	39,442	20,273	19,169	68,991	35,093	33,898	107,622	54,436	53,186
NORTH WEST TERRITORIES												
Adult	6,212	3,693	2,519	33,850	21,484	12,366	3,825	1,744	2,081	2,916	1,473	1,443
Child	3,294	1,705	1,589	12,945	6,636	6,309	1,842	935	907	1,425	747	648
SASKAT-CHEWAN												
Adult	*	*	*	*	*	*	52,319	29,682	22,637	320,178	202,674	117,504
Child	*	*	*	*	*	*	24,386	12,394	11,992	109,305	55,724	53,581
ALBERTA												
Adult	*	*	*	*	*	*	43,981	26,031	17,950	248,959	158,250	90,709
Child	*	*	*	*	*	*	19,978	10,076	9,702	81,023	41,537	39,486
TOTAL												
Adult	**42,646**	**25,603**	**17,043**	**123,448**	**73,708**	**49,740**	**257,662**	**146,561**	**111,101**	**870,720**	**532,342**	**338,378**
Child	**19,588**	**10,253**	**9,335**	**52,387**	**26,909**	**25,478**	**114,997**	**58,498**	**56,499**	**299,375**	**152,444**	**146,931**

Source: 6th Census of Canada, 1921, Volume 1; Table 4

* Included with the NorthWest Territories

** An 'adult' is defined as being an individual over the age of 14.

***A 'child' is defined as being an individual between the ages of 4 to 14 inclusive.

TABLE C

NUMBER OF FAMILIES IN MANITOBA AND THE NORTH-WEST TERRITORIES: 1881-1911

Provinces	**1881**	**1891**	**1901**	**1911**
Manitoba	14,169	31,786	51,056	89,861
NW Territories	11,726	14,415	34,291	4,085
Saskatchewan	*	*	*	120,751
Alberta	*	*	*	90,346
TOTAL	**25,895**	**46,201**	**85,347**	**305,043**

Source: 2nd Census, 1881; Table I
3rd Census, 1891; Table II, Volume 1
4th Census, 1901; Table VII
5th Census, 1911; Table XII

**Included with the North-West Territories*

TABLE D

HOMESTEAD ENTRIES IN MANITOBA, SASKATCHEWAN AND ALBERTA: 1872-1913

Year	**Manitoba**	**Saskatchewan**	**Alberta**	
1872	283	*	*	71,210
1873	878	*	*	
1874	1,376	*	*	
1875	499	*	*	
1876	347	*	*	
1877	845	*	*	
1878	1,788	*	*	
1879	4,068	*	*	
1880	2,074	*	*	
1881	2,730	23	*	
1882	6,262	1,121	*	
1883	6,063	*	*	
1884	3,753	*	*	
1885	1,858	*	*	
1886	2,657	*	*	
1887	1,053	356	271	
1888	1,665	425	230	
1889	2,225	1,242	504	
1890	1,401	758	524	
1891	1,651	930	784	
1892	1,687	1,797	1,257	
1893	1,276	1,159	1,513	
1894	3,209	*	*	
1895	866	461	1,000	
1896	993	362	411	
1897	609	301	230	
1898	1,426	960	1,049	
1899	2,124	2,159	1,745	406,304
1900	2,154	2,703	2,470	
1901	1,933	2,332	3,806	
1902	2,263	6,612	5,681	
1903	3,253	19,941	8,069	
1904	2,005	15,659	8,201	
1905	1,707	19,787	9,138	
1906	1,806	27,692	12,263	
1907	1,231	13,501	6,843	
1908	1,748	18,825	9,614	
1909	3,761	21,120	13,771	
1910	2,529	21,575	17,187	
1911	3,082	25,227	15,964	
1912	3,158	20,484	15,184	
1913	2,826	17,556	12,942	

Source: Urquhart and Buckley, 1965, Series K34-41.

***Entries included with Manitoba figure.**

APPENDIX TWO

TABLE A

NUMBER OF BOYS AND GIRLS BY PROVINCE*

Sex	Alberta	Saskatchewan	Manitoba	TOTAL
Boys	26	35	71	132
Girls	20	27	50	97
TOTAL	46	62	121	229

*** It should be noted that there were 24 individuals who did not indicate their place of residence and 7 who failed to note their gender. If these individuals were included, the *total number of subjects would be 260.***

When compiling figures from the data collected to prepare the Tables in Appendix 2, three policy choices were made to ensure that an accurate accounting of the children whose stories were used in the study was made. Firstly, stories with only general references in the text to 'children of the family' were not utilized due their lack of precision, reliability, and focus. Secondly, children's stories about their parents' or grandparents' activities, rather than their own, were utilized only to provide background or context for the stories told by children about their own work. Finally, if the author of the memoir, letter or other document included sufficient details respecting the work activities, age, sex, and place of residence of siblings or cousins, these children were added into the totals.

TABLE B

AGE BY THE NUMBER OF BOYS AND GIRLS*

Age	Boys	Girls
4-5	3	0
6-8	7	9
9-11	40	32
12-14	53	60
> 14	12	7

*** It should be noted that 30 subjects did not mention their age and an additional 7 did not identify their sex. If these individuals were included, the overall *total would be 260*.**

TABLE C

PRODUCTIVE LABOUR

GIRLS' CONTRIBUTIONS BY AGE AND TYPE OF WORK*

Age	Field Work	Livestock Production	Working With Horses	Stable Chores	Transport Crop	Clearing Fields	Chores/Running Errands/Helping
4-5							
6-8		2	2			1	1
9-11	2	9	7			2	6
12-14	5	18	8	1		2	11
>14			1		1		

* It should be noted that children could report participating in multiple jobs. As such, totals compiled from this data would not be representative of the total number of children working.

TABLE D

PRODUCTIVE LABOUR:

BOYS' CONTRIBUTIONS BY AGE AND TYPE OF WORK*

Age	Field Work	Livestock Production	Working With Horses	Stable Chores	Transport Crop	Clearing Fields	Chores/Running Errands/Helping
4-5	1	1				1	1
6-8	2	4		1			3
9-11	25	20	14	2	3	4	10
12-14	38	29	10	2	6	6	4
> 14	10	8	1			4	

* It should be noted that children could report participating in multiple jobs. As such, totals compiled from this data would not be representative of the total number of children working.

TABLE E

ENTREPRENEURIAL LABOUR:

GIRLS' CONTRIBUTIONS BY AGE AND TYPE OF WORK*

Age	Paid Employment	Gopher Bounties and Trapping	Raising Animals for Sale	Sales of Fruit and Other Produce
4-5				
6-8	2	1	2	
9-11	1	1	12	1
12-14			11	2
> 14	5	1	3	2

* It should be noted that children could report participating in multiple jobs. As such, totals compiled from this data would not be representative of the total number of children working.

TABLE F

ENTREPRENEURIAL LABOUR:

BOYS' CONTRIBUTIONS BY AGE AND TYPE OF WORK*

Age	Paid Employment	Gopher Bounties and Trapping	Raising Animals for Sale	Sales of Fruit and Other Produce
4-5			1	
6-8	1	1	3	
9-11	3	6	16	1
12-14	6	5	18	
> 14	5	4	5	1

* It should be noted that children could report participating in multiple jobs. As such, totals compiled from this data would not be representative of the total number of children working.

TABLE G

SUBSISTENCE LABOUR:

GIRLS' CONTRIBUTIONS BY AGE AND TYPE OF WORK*

Age	Animal Products	Obtaining Fuel	Obtaining Water	Hunting and Fishing	Gardening & Harvesting Wild Fruits & Vegetables	Protection from Insects & Animals	Protection from Fires
4-5		1					
6-8	4	1	1		1	1	1
9-11	21	6	6	1	10	1	
12-14	23	2	6	3	18	1	2
> 14	4	2	4	2	3		2

* It should be noted that children could report participating in multiple jobs. As such, totals compiled from this data would not be representative of the total number of children working.

TABLE H

SUBSISTENCE LABOUR:

BOY'S CONTRIBUTIONS BY AGE AND TYPE OF WORK

Age	Animal Products	Obtaining Fuel	Obtaining Water	Hunting and Fishing	Gardening & Harvesting Wild Fruits & Vegetables	Protection from Insects & Animals	Protection from Fires
4-5		1					
6-8	3	2	1	2	2	1	1
9-11	18	7	6	6	5	1	2
12-14	14	5	7	9	9		6
> 14	2	1	4	3			3

* It should be noted that children could report participating in multiple jobs. As such, totals compiled from this data would not be representative of the total number of children working.

TABLE I

DOMESTIC LABOUR:

GIRLS' CONTRIBUTIONS BY AGE AND TYPE OF WORK*

Age	Cleaning House	Washing Clothes and Making Beds	Child Care	Food Preparation	Sewing
4-5					
6-8	4	3	1	5	1
9-11	29	20	7	19	6
12-14	43	40	10	30	13
> 14	7	3	3	7	3

* It should be noted that children could report participating in multiple jobs. As such, totals compiled from this data would not be representative of the total number of children working.

TABLE J

DOMESTIC LABOUR:

BOYS' CONTRIBUTIONS BY AGE AND TYPE OF WORK*

Age	Cleaning House	Washing Clothes and Making Beds	Child Care	Food Preparation	Sewing
4-5					
6-8	2				
9-11	9	2	2	2	
12-14	2		2		
> 14			1		1

* It should be noted that children could report participating in multiple jobs. As such, totals compiled from this data would not be representative of the total number of children working.

TABLE K

TYPE OF LABOUR BY GENDER*

Type of Labour	Boys	Girls
Productive	87	39
Entrepreneurial	48	33
Subsistence	53	62
Domestic	17	89
Total Number of Boys and Girls in the Study Population by Gender Group	131	122

* It should be noted that children could report participating in multiple jobs. As such, totals compiled from this data would not be representative of the total number of children working. It should also be noted that 7 subjects did not mention their sex.

TABLE L

TYPE OF LABOUR BY AGE*

Type of Labour	AGE 4-5	 6-8	 9-11	 12-14	 >14
Productive	1	13	40	77	14
Entrepreneurial	1	6	30	36	10
Subsistence	-	11	45	77	12
Domestic	-	13	44	48	9
Total Number of Children in the Study Population by Age Group	3	17	75	116	19

*** It should be noted that children could report participating in multiple jobs. As such, totals compiled from this data would not be representative of the total number of children working. It should also be noted that 30 subjects did not mention their age.**